

THE SPINSTER  
BY: SARAH: N  
CLEGHORN







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# THE SPINSTER

*A NOVEL WHEREIN A NINETEENTH  
CENTURY GIRL FINDS HER PLACE  
IN THE TWENTIETH*

By

SARAH N. CLEGHORN



NEW YORK  
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1916

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To

My brother

CHARLES DALTON CLEGHORN

and his wife

SUSAN PINDAR EMBURY CLEGHORN

this book is affectionately dedicated

355269



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## CHAPTER I

### THE MIDNIGHT TRAIN

THE New York and Montreal Express regularly pulled into the Tory Hill station at the same hour in 1892 that it pulls in at now : which means that there was never much left of the night when passengers had descended from the train, ascended the stage, and been driven (some three miles) through the two long straggling villages of the New Street and the Old Street. The sleeper, in short, favors Tory Hill at half-past one A.M.

It was on time, and into the rainy blackness two ladies in bustled black henrietta dresses and large crape veils climbed down, followed by a thin, fair, stooping gentleman with a black band on his sleeve, and two children, whom other parents of that day might have dressed in mourning, but their father and aunts had not. The serious, plain, but fresh-complexioned girl of nine wore a box-pleated cashmere dress of dark crimson: the good-looking little boy had on full dark-blue kilts, and a Scotch cap on his head. They had come almost direct from their mother's funeral to live henceforth with her two single sisters in the ancestral Vermont village where those sisters owned a small brown house which they called Wakerobin.

Jolting along in the stage through the wetness and blackness, Ellen strained her eyes, dizzy after the long journey of two days and three nights, to see, if she could,

the mountains she had heard so much about. In Minneapolis there were bluffs: but she understood that mountains were like inverted cornucopias, only more slim and pointed: for a picture of such Gothic mountains had hung on their wall in Minneapolis. Why couldn't it have been moonlight, and she could have seen these Green Mountains her mother had talked so much about?

"Where are they, Aunt Fran?"

"Right over there, dearie."

"Oh dear, I can't see anything."

"Wait till morning."

Father patted her shoulder with such exceeding tender pats that she tried to get hold of his hand: but little Jim at the same moment got hold of it, as he sat jogging up and down on Aunt Fran's plump lap. But Aunt Sallie, the young aunt, took hold of Ellen's hand.

Father was going back to Minneapolis on Monday. He had an office in the Hennepin Building ("Investment Broker—Commercial Paper"), and had taken a room in a boarding-house instead of the small house on the lake-side where Mother and he had planned to move this spring. The lease had been all but signed. Then Mother, who was never sick, whom Ellen and Jim had never even seen in bed, she was always up so early, giving them their morning baths and stripping beds and opening windows,—Mother suddenly got sick and was queer and didn't know them. Father had wanted Ellen to tell all over again how Mother had changed places with her that day in church when there was such a draft blowing. (It was Lent, and Mother went to church every afternoon, often taking Ellen. Father only went on Sundays.)



Mother had pneumonia. She was only sick a week. Sometimes she talked to them, when they went in to say good-night, and once she thought Ellen was little Sarah, who had died. It made Ellen shiver all over, that look out of Mother's eyes, that didn't know who she was.

Ellen had had some ideas of her own about things grown-up people thought children never considered, such as death. But all she felt at her mother's funeral was blankness and numbness. Aunt Fran and Aunt Sallie had taken her to sleep with them, and every time she had waked up in the night after the funeral, Aunt Sallie had hold of her hand. Jimmie slept that night with his father. He said Father kept waking him up, turning over and turning over; and finally he asked if Father had a stomach-ache; because he thought *he* had one, himself, he felt so queer, and sort of sick; and Father said, so did he.

These things went back and forth in Ellen's mind as the stage jolted slowly up the long hill between the New and Old villages, and the rain blew gustily by, and searching clean cold air whiffed through the flapping rubber curtains.

"Where *are* the mountains, Aunt Sallie?"

"Right in front of you, dear child."

"I *wish* I could see them!"

The driver called "Whoa!" and tipped the stage down, side-wise, into a driveway, before a lamp shining out of a window.

## CHAPTER II

### TORY HILL AND WAKEROBIN

THE Old Street was the court end of Tory Hill: the porticoed, shuttered, wide-clapboarded, elmed, and lawny part. The New Street took its revenge by having the bank, the station, and the dentist. No trolley or train profaned the dignified and thinly-peopled Old Street. In the middle of it were the church and the store, coeval, colonial, solemnly facing each other across the tiny common like equals. Both were of cream-colored brick, with white fluted cornices, and white pillared porches. They even were alike in having at the end furthest from the sidewalk, the one a pulpit, the other a pulpit-like platform, where old Mr. Barnhaven seemed to be always making up enormous ledgers, standing at his desk, like a pillar of black broadcloth. In the windows of the store, sun-faded miscellaneous goods dozed away the decades, unsold and unadvertised, beneath ancient indigo shades that rusted on their rollers. In the church, echoes of tuning-forks, rustles of forgotten hoops, were imprisoned in the stale, warm, wood-smelling air, like sea murmurs in a shell. Throughout the week, solemn, steady "trading" was done at Willets and Barnhaven's store, by farmers who stuck to an old reliable "stand" in preference to the garish shops always starting up, or selling out, in the New Street. On Sundays these same

substantial freeholders came to church, where Willets and Barnhaven, in partnership as deacons, passed the plate to them.

Ellen's aunts also traded at Willets and Barnhaven's, and Ellen had often to wait, on some buxom summer morning, for Mr. Willets to grind the coffee and argue the while in incessant politics with Mr. Barnhaven. Mr. Willets was a black Democratic sheep in the white Republican fold of Tory Hill. His father had been a Copperhead: and once, the children all said, Mr. Willets had made a bet that he would trundle Mr. Barnhaven in a wheelbarrow the whole length of the Old Street, if Harrison were elected: "and he had to do it too!" the story always ended triumphantly. The Willetses lived next door to Ellen's aunts, and Jennie Willets soon became an inveterate playmate of Ellen's and when boys were scarce, of little Jim's too, though he preferred any size or variety of boy to a petticoat.

Ellen's really bosom friend, however, was Julia Oldenbury. Julia was an orphan. She lived an enormous distance away down in the deeper depths of the valley, where the river ran. These remote lowlands were always called "the valley," as if everything between Windward Mountain on the west and Hemlock Mountain on the east were *not* the valley! The frosts were always harder down at Julia's. The may-apples and the wild strawberries came later. Ellen hardly ever got down to see Julia, and Julia hardly ever got up to see her, and yet they were bosom friends. They became intimate after seeing each other a very few times; not because they were distant cousins, nor because quaint, slender Julia, with her dark-red hair in a net, and her immeasur-

ably old-timey white stockings, was decidedly a pet with the aunts. It was because Julia liked hymns and poems, and knew a lot of them by heart, and could glow and fraternize over them. With her Ellen could doubly enjoy splendid battles in history, and noble sentiments in the Readers: Patrick Henry and Abraham Lincoln and Richard Cœur de Lion and Joan of Arc. Jennie Willets cared no more for poetry and history than Jim did. She just picked out the shortest hymns on Sunday to learn, and sometimes she learned an old one over again. Ellen played with Jennie, however, every ordinary afternoon of her life, squat-tag, cross-tag, cudgel, relieve, duck-on-a-rock, one-old-cat, dolls, house, store, and doctor. Propinquity united them. They caught hitches together on lumber sleds in winter, and hung may-baskets on door-knobs in spring together;—confections of tissue paper and birch-bark, with adder-tongues and hepaticas and curly ferns inside.

Wakerobin was a house with an ell. It had two short, narrow marble paths, deeply bedded in grass full of dandelions and plantains, running, one from the front porch and one from the ell porch, out to the slate sidewalk. It had a wineglass elm and a sugar maple in front, beside a clematis vine on the ell porch, which Aunt Sallie and one of her young men had dug up in the woods. There were eight apple trees in a row round the garden. All the eight were climbable. Every child living near this end of the Old Street had one of the Misses Mowbray's apple trees for his or her "house." Downstairs there was a little bit of a parlor, with Victorian superabundance of ornament, even to two fans crossed on the wall, tied with a ribbon. There was an upright piano in

this parlor, where Ellen had to "practice"; but fortunately there were also some mildly interesting books on the marble-topped tables, which she could stand on the music rack and read while she did scales. The dining-room was in the ell; the ell porch ran across the front of it. To this day, in many towns, Ellen has never seen, and never hopes to see, so pleasant, summer-like and hospitable a dining-room. Especially at Sunday night tea, when biscuits and honey and lettuce and tomatoes and one-two-three-four cake and Aunt Fran's tutti-frutti jam were all on the table, country fashion, together; and when neighbors, or one of Aunt Sallie's young men, came in from the ell porch, and gave that O so pleasant company air to everything.

Wakerobin was really a very small house. Upstairs there were only three bedrooms, a storeroom peopled with trunks, and two "cubby-holes" in the corners of the hall, in one of which Ellen kept her playthings. How occasional guests, three or four at a time, were ever accommodated here, even with much bandying of threats to put the fattest ones to sleep in the barn, Ellen could never remember, any more than she can now figure out how she and Jimmie ever set up a complete croquet set in the tiny square of front lawn between the two diminutive marble paths. Both were accomplished somehow.

Though after their one very quiet summer of 1892, the aunts began having tea parties and whist parties, and entertaining the Shakespere Club, their new dresses, spring and fall, were still black, and the crape veils were only taken off and folded away in one of the trunks in the storeroom, to be replaced by still longer ones of nuns-veiling. Aunt Sallie's personable young men, home from

Bennington and Rutland for Sundays, came down and sat for hours making pleasant frolicsome talk on the ell porch, and sometimes stayed to tea. Summer people, too, from the high-priced but old-fashioned Windward House, used to come in roving bands, with cigars and parasols and walking-sticks, in flannels and blazers. Sometimes Aunt Sallie went out with them in the evenings and rang staid citizens' doorbells and ran away: but this was carefully concealed from the children at the time. And still amid all this cheerfulness, there were older people who sometimes came, distant cousins from up the state, or old friends who hadn't seen the aunts for a long time: and they would exclaim over Jim and Ellen, and say, "Well, well, are these poor Mary's children?" At such times Ellen used to hear the sad details of her mother's short illness all gone over again. She grew to know exactly what to expect when the visitor said, "I haven't heard any of the particulars." But she never became accustomed to the particulars, nor ceased dully to dread hearing them. Whenever she heard them, a singular cloud—it was not of grief, it was not of fear, but a sense of something weird, stealthy, and supernatural, crept over her horizon. Then she would think a good deal for several days together, about death, and would be more timid than ever about illness. If Jimmie had a coated tongue and Aunt Fran gave him aromatic syrup of rhubarb, Ellen was uneasy. If she herself had a cold, the family prayers before breakfast had a tragic sound about them. Many happy years did not take away the mold and cavernousness from her thought of death, or turn it into something normal and friendly.

Nor was there ever, in those conversations about her mother which she overheard, any cheerful and matter-of-fact reference to the life to come. Heaven was mentioned, with decent vague solemnity. She heard them say that her mother was "better off," "far happier," but they said it too solemnly to make it seem believable.

A cold in the head once or twice a year was all she had to build her immediate fears of death upon; and Jimmie's occasionally inspected tongue was the only excuse Aunt Fran ever had to administer rhubarb. But still Aunt Fran loved to say, "My sister's children have delicate constitutions." She gravely assured visitors that "When these children *are* sick, they are *very* sick." Visitors suppressed their smiles as the stalwart children ran in and out of the warm, overdecorated little parlor. They murmured that "the mountain air would be good for them."

Not only the mountain air was good, but the beauty and strength of the mountains were good for them; good for any children who had the luck to live in Tory Hill, Tewkesbury, Green Hollow, or any other of those comely and sturdy towns along the Ballantyne. The sharp line of Windward Mountain, like a headless lion or tiger crouching, was beautiful; the long folds at the southern end, Cock Hollow and Stratton Glen, were poured full of dark-blue shadows, like blue glaciers, after sunset; and the narrowing north end of the valley, where Bald and Mother Mountains closed in toward each other, left a wedge of pale blue distance between,—a slice of ten-mile-thick hazy air, which was an eternal invitation to an adventurous eye to follow and dwell beyond. Ellen once found a poem reprinted in *Littell's Living Age* (a

dingy cover which sometimes rewarded the persevering omniverous young reader) with a stanza about mountains which she greatly liked:

“Pearly are the skies in the country of my fathers:  
Purple are thy mountains, home of my heart.”

They *were* purple, often, in just that dreamy weather when the skies were pearly, and pearly clouds came down on Windward, and shut out the wide scars of the avalanches. But beyond being beautiful, this country was sturdy and democratic above most of the New England states. There was always in Vermont an odd freedom from ancestrally professional families, and especially from ministerial families. The proudest boast of family which Ellen ever heard in Tory Hill came from Mr. Barnhaven, at the Shakespere Club. He boasted of an ancestor who had entered the profession of law, and had given it up because his conscience could not brook legal customs. “He went back,” said Mr. Barnhaven grandly, “to work on his uncle’s farm.” Old ladies used to recount, with nodding relish, the reminiscence of the Governor’s lady, who entertained city visitors at the same table with the hired men. The story ran that Governor Chittenden’s wife stood at the back door ringing the dinner bell for the farmhands to come in; and one of the city visitors remonstrated, saying:

“Surely you don’t seat your farmhands with your family!”

“Well—I do,” Mrs. Chittenden replied apologetically; “but when I think of the hard work they do, and the appetites they have, I feel that I ought to serve them



first, and wait myself, with my friends, for the second table."

At the co-educational seminary, at the far end of the Old Street, were always boys and girls who were working for their schooling, waiting on table, filling the lamps, and sweeping the dormitories of their schoolmates: and often these very girls were the belles of school society, and these boys, having hung their overalls up in the shed, became the favorite partners at the holiday dances. At church socials Mrs. Black, who came to wash for the aunts every Friday, was sometimes seated at the minister's table, while Mrs. Barnhaven waited on her: and when the Barnhaven children had a party, the Black children were always invited.

Aunt Fran and Aunt Sallie had, however, more sense of social grades than most people in Tory Hill. Aunt Fran, in fact, once read a paper on "American Caste" before the Shakespere Club, which was very warmly discussed, and indeed prolonged the meeting very late. Ellen woke up when the aunts came in, and as they talked a little louder than usual, she listened and heard Aunt Fran say to Aunt Sallie that she had "stirred up a hornet's nest." Ellen hoped that didn't mean that anybody's feelings were hurt. It was always a perfect nightmare to her,—the idea that she had ever hurt anybody's feelings, or that anybody belonging to her could possibly have done such a murderous thing. If Aunt Fran had in any way hurt Mrs. Black's feelings, it would be up to Ellen to make amends somehow when Mrs. Black should come to wash next Friday. She thought impatiently:

"How *could* Aunt Fran imagine she could write a

paper about who ought to look down on whom, without hurting *somebody?* ”

At the same time, she always had in the back of her own mind the complacent notion, “Of course, *I’m a lady.*” Especially was this notion basking and preening itself in her mind on Sunday mornings when she went to the Congregational church and sat among others dressed in less good taste, or speaking less correctly than herself; or whose fathers, so far from being “investment brokers,” drove the butcher cart or took away the garbage can.

Though Miss Frances Mowbray, to suit the imperious whimsicalities which made her such an interesting character, might write papers on Caste, and scandalize the idealistic democrats of the Shakespere Club, nobody could suit herself in a more untrammelled manner in the invitations to those large tea parties which she and Aunt Sallie gave every spring and fall. She perhaps regarded her social position in Tory Hill as so adamantine that she could take what liberties she chose with it, without in any sense setting an example or a precedent for either herself or others. She issued an occasional invitation to a Tory Hill nobody so socially obscure that even the church society had not found him out. These invitations went forth like mandates from a monarch. They seemed to create a sort of rank in the recipient, by the very fact of their issuance.

The parties at Wakerobin were built on the general foundation of scalloped oysters and celery salad. These were party dishes inviolate, and were seldom served, except as party leftovers, to the family. There was a special company jam, too: thick syrupy pineapple,

"pound for pound." Tea parties usually brought on (beforehand) one of Aunt Sallie's sick headaches. The sweeping and dusting above and below stairs in preparation for a party were "one too many," as she said, for her. The house was scrubbed from cellar to storeroom. Instead of sympathizing with Aunt Sallie when she went dizzily to bed, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, Aunt Fran only said:

"My idea of a good time is to clean house all day and go to a ball in the evening."

The aunts knew every soul in Tory Hill Old Street. They knew not only all the grown-ups, but every child: and not only all the children, but all the horses, all the dogs, and many of the cats. "Ponto Barnhaven, you've run away again," Aunt Fran would say reproachfully to the old Irish setter that came scouting round the garbage pail; and she did not, like Aunt Sallie, encourage the doctor's big black cat in coming to the woodshed door for cream. Aunt Sallie loved cats, and had had eleven when she was small. Ellen drew some *éclat* from this circumstance, and could always puncture any incipient superiority in other children by means of it. Even when the fathers of other children marched with the Civil War veterans, she could regain the respect of all by saying:

"Aunt Sallie had eleven cats when she was my age."

Both aunts had a singular trait of character in their immense longsuffering toward animals. Keturah and Tabbie, the old tiger cats, regularly walked over the pantry floor immediately after it had been painted, and left their velvet footprints. Larkum, the cross little barking terrier, was never punished. He was tenderly washed

and scrubbed as soon as possible after his encounter with the skunk. Ellen herself willingly carried out the condemned tub to the foot of the garden where the wretched and mortified Larkum was in exile.

Not only had the aunts this consistent compassion for all friendly beasts, but they had a natural respect for the interests of animals as such. Toads hopping up the lawn were regarded as having rights, and as doubtless knowing where they were bound for, and why. The chipmunk's holes were not filled up, for an animal's house was not to be lightly destroyed. In sweeping the ant-hills off the sidewalk the children learned to be careful not to choke the entry to those invisible labyrinths below. The inevitable line was drawn, it is true. No consideration was shown to spiders' webs (though spiders and ants were always carefully extricated from the dustpan). The house was not free from mouse-traps and fly-catching devices. Ellen knew a trick worth ten mouse-traps, however. She regularly sprung them, on the sly, and left the bits of cheese to be consumed in perfect security. She spent many a careful minute rescuing living flies from the fly-paper, until she found out that they were still helpless and could not wield their sticky legs and wings. Jimmie, when he attained to knickerbockers, began to go fishing. Ellen discouraged him as far as in her lay: but their father was a seasoned fisherman, and sent his son an expensive jointed rod. Jimmie caught a few dace and bull-pouts: but at least he killed them quickly, and did not leave them gasping on the grass. His sister managed to continue to enjoy bread-and-butter-and-sugar picnics on the shores of Stratton Pond, if Jimmie would only (and so pleasant was his disposition

that he sometimes would!) bait his hook with dead June-bugs, and let her tip out the whole canful of angleworms to wriggle away happily in the grass.

By Stratton Pond, and in the Ledge Woods, where they had other bread-and-butter picnics with the Willetses and Barnhavens, or strawberrying in the pasture round the big rock, Ellen would often find herself drifted away from, and had nothing to blame for it but that mooning, day-dreaming habit of hers which caused the aunts so often to clap their hands and exclaim: "Come, Ellen, come back!" She had a great habit of indulging grandiloquent and egotistic fancies. They were always lying in wait for her. While other children, with healthier objective interests, were observing tree-toads and meadow-mice, learning how the chippy built, and where to find the lady-slipper, she was lost by the half-hour in vain pretentious conceits of her own future. Sometimes she contented herself with the notion of being a mere Lady Bountiful, but oftener she would be a Joan of Arc of sorts; not a soldier, quite; but a martyr, grandly dying for some great cause, and having a monument erected, like the one to Ethan Allen on the little common in front of the church, to her undying memory. Physically brave she most certainly knew herself *not* to be, though she would rather have been brave than anything else in the world. She was always trying to think she was getting to be braver, and hoping somebody else would notice it. Aunt Sallie was so fatuous and fond that she would always play up to this sly, transparent fishing. Particularly was this true after a visit of the children to the dentist. It was Aunt Sallie's greatest ordeal to take them there. Once, when Ellen had had a

loose tooth pulled, Aunt Fran heard her expatiate so long on it to the young French-Canadian girl who was at that time their maid-of-all-work, that she herself went into the kitchen and said:

“Ellen, don’t you think you’ve talked long enough about that tooth?”

It was not in human nature to laugh promptly and whole-heartedly at her own expense. Nor did she even try, in those young years, to imitate the frank, insensitive view of himself which Jimmie for example took. Jimmie, whom Ellen regarded, with the purblind eyes of an elder sister, as a mere fat, bewitching big baby, with lovely silky red cheeks; and who was all the time forming his cool, sane, Tom-Tulliverish opinions about her!—It was exceedingly easy to mortify Ellen. She was thoroughly mortified about this matter of the tooth; and yet her hunger for Marie-Louise’s praise of her fortitude in not crying when it was pulled continued unabated. She even angled at Marie-Louise a few times, cautiously, skipping out of the kitchen if Aunt Fran came in. Aunt Fran was too brisk and wholesome a corrective not to make Ellen shrink and wince (as in fact far older victims did) when she turned on the shower-bath.

Greatly desiring to be brave, without taking any definite steps in that direction by deliberately sticking a needle under her finger-nail, or taking off a hot lamp-chimney, as she did later, Ellen went on being a wistful and cowardly little girl, whose passion was to be safe and to safeguard everybody and everything else from any danger to life, limb, or discomfort. She would have suffered something to make the world a cotton-wool world, placarded all over with warnings, “You might

fall in! You might fall out!" But after all her secret hero was Perseus, in "Tanglewood Tales," when Pallas Athené told him to throw himself into the air, off the rocky cliff, and there would suddenly appear wings on his feet. That story was crammed with meaning to her. It fed her inward ferment of "cold fear with hot desire."

Dawning perspicuity in little Jim began to show in the occasional application, when goaded, of the epithet "old maid" to his sister. He used it one morning in front of the post-office, before several other children. Ellen at first thought he only referred to having beaten her at a hard contested game of Old Maid on the previous rainy afternoon. When she quite took in the brotherly insult (which she had invited by publicly buttoning up her brother's coat in full view of larger and less sister-ridden boys) she was indignant, and worse than indignant, for tears arose in her pussy-willow-colored eyes. Her inconvenient feelings were hurt.

### CHAPTER III

## THE TARANTULA, AND OTHER RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

THE fact was that she did look old-maidish, in the square-tabbed brown velveteen jacket, made over from one of Aunt Sallie's, and starched brown chambray skirts standing out, stockade-like, round her stalwart long legs. And yet her clothes were in no wise quaint. They conformed to the juvenile modes of that good year 1894. Her shoes were trim, her calves well rounded and snugly stockinged; her clover-trimmed hat was a pretty, childlike piece of country millinery, bought at the young milliner's in the New Street. It was her old-maidish way of wearing her clothes, and something in her earnest, unhumorous face that suggested spectacles.

Saddled with the reverberating epithet "old maid" she went home and crossed into the pasture beyond the schoolhouse, where she knew all the arts of hopping into the safe center of cinquefoil or "prairie-weed" bushes which formed bristling oases between gulfs of bottomless black cow-trampled mud. She was looking for the pale long-horned violets and the wee fairy white violets that grew there. She meant to make a wreath of them for her doll.

She was just going to hop on a big flat stone which diversified the prairie-weed, and in the cracks of which



some sweet little ferns, that would be charming on a doll's hat, were sprouting, when——

“Oh, my soul and body!”

There was an enormous, ominous black spider, undoubtedly a tarantula, such as came in bunches of bananas, and if they bit you, you died within an hour,—there was a tarantula, right on that stone, that would have bitten right through her low yellow ties, without turning a hair, if she had taken the step one stout long leg was raised to take. She froze back into the prairie-weed bush and looked with charmed glazed eyes at the deadly creature. For some time she looked fixedly at it, and then backed, with charmed eyes still upon it, with infinite slowness and pains, from oasis to oasis in the mud: clawing with one foot behind her before each step, lest she miss the dry safe middles of the bushes. At length she turned a palpitating back and fled with long hops to the pasture fence and across the street to Wake-robin.

What an escape! The danger was still too near to dwell upon. Luckily there was her doll to be dressed, and a wreath would have to be made of johnny-jump-ups, as the smallest flowers now obtainable. Jennie came down with her boy-doll in a sailor suit, and they had a wedding, and a wedding breakfast, on dolls' Britannia dishes, of clover quills pulled out of the heads;—an infinitesimal drop of honey secreted in each.

Jennie had to go home at four, however. She was the eldest of the Willets “tribe,” and had to pick up all the playthings, as well as learn her lessons for district school, before supper. Ellen was left alone with one newlywed while Jennie took the groom home with her.

Jimmie had gone to the New Street, in the stage, with the aunts. Marie-Louise had toothache, and was sitting with her feet in the oven and a shawl over her head.

What an awfully early hour for Jennie Willets to have to go in! Why couldn't she pick up the playthings after tea? There was nothing to do for an hour and a half:—nothing, at least, that one could be interested in, after the excitement of the wedding. *St. Nicholas* for May had been read through, and so had *Harper's Young People*. What if she were to go up and ring the Willets' doorbell and ask if Jennie couldn't come out and play a *few* minutes more? The thought was not entertained seriously. Mrs. Willets always said the same thing on such occasions:

“No, I don't think best for Jennie to go out and play any more this afternoon.”

Beside, Jennie would soon be out of her own accord, if she were allowed to be.

Well, there was nothing to do, and nowhere to go. It was a horrid thought, too, as the sun began to “draw water” up the mountain, and the woods darkened, and the glaciers of blue shadow began to glide down Cock Hollow and Stratton Glen:—a horrid thought indeed, that the tarantula was still there in the pasture! Lying in wait on the flat rock, the murderous insect would bite the first person who stepped within his reach. It might be—oh no, not Jimmie, for she could warn him, and even withhold him by force. She could tell the aunts. Oh yes, and she could tell Jennie, and all the other Willets children, and all the Barnhavens could be told. She could keep all the children in the neighborhood from going there. There was no earthly need for her to go

back herself to kill the tarantula. But she knew now that she should have scrunched it at sight, instead of backing away. What had prevented her from doing so? Perhaps partly her careful habit of avoiding stepping on ants and angleworms: but chiefly, she knew too well, plain panic fear, "the black godmother." And now the pasture would never be safe again, for man or beast. But of course she could warn everybody. She could even warn all the district school children at recess tomorrow, though she wasn't allowed to play over there at the school.

Oh yes, she could keep everybody out. Larkum and Keturah and Tabbie never went there, either. But she *did* wish she had scrunched the tarantula. Somebody's dogs or cats might go! She couldn't warn animals. It would be her fault, whoever or whatever got bitten. She was the only person in Tory Hill who knew where to find the monster. Even the selectmen didn't know, and couldn't have done anything.

Drawn, at a snail's pace, to the pasture fence, with dread and shrinking she climbed it. God would take care of her. Well, of course! . . . but perhaps it was a little foolhardy to come. The sun had set over Windward Mountain, the blue glaciers were spreading and streaming among the dark unleaved woods. . . . She had not gone very far into the pasture. She came back.

It was too late to be out, anyway. It was time to change her dress and shoes and stockings, and wash her face and hands for tea. When she had put on her afternoon dress, she sat down by the dining-room stove and read "Tanglewood Tales" all over again.

But when she said her prayers that night, she was surprised to find that she really wanted, in a way, to go back

and look for the tarantula. The tide seemed to be setting the other way in her heart. The tide of courage had begun coming in. Would it rise to the required point, she wondered? Probably not. She went to sleep wondering. . But on the next night she found herself plugging away at it again.

It took several nights to bring it to high tide. High tide was the point from which, as she found, her courage could endure the daylight ebb, and still be high enough. Lamplight courage was always higher than daylight courage.

On that final morning it rained, and she had to take her umbrella and wear her rubbers. This however only made the adventure more interesting. When the tide was full, nothing could stop the explorer.

She went into the pasture, and hopped over to the flat rock. The tarantula was not there! This contingency the baser elements in the explorer had foreseen, and it had provided a sort of shamefaced comfort, all along. Still she knew the explorer to be an honest and leal explorer. With increasing light-heartedness she searched all that quarter of the pasture, staying even beyond Aunt Fran's imperative call from the window.

"Ellen Graham, come right straight back home! What are you up to, over there in that soaking wet pasture?"

The search was thorough, but in vain; and yet by no means in vain; for in her singular mind she felt as confident of having safeguarded the community as if she had scrunched the monster and its mate and all their progeny under the heel of her rubber. That night she had that most lovely dream, which she had had two or three times

before, apropos, usually, of nothing in particular—the dream in which she went up in the Ledge Woods on a Sunday afternoon and found some new, large, lovely blue and pink flowers, such as never grew on sea or land.

. . . . .

On both sides, the Grahams were Episcopalians. In the Old Street, however, there was nothing of their persuasion but a chapel of ease, open during the summer only, where divinity students conducted service for the benefit chiefly of the hotel guests. All the rest of the year the beautiful old Congregational church, standing opposite the beautiful old store, ministered to all the Protestants in town. The Catholics drove down by stage to Tewkesbury.

Little St. Mark's, then, the brown shingled summer chapel, away down at the Seminary end of the Old Street, was tended and decked in July and August by the affectionate fingers of Aunt Sallie. She swept the aisles, and dusted the chancel and choir, and put flowers and ferns in the altar vases, and polished the bronze cross and lectern with putz paste, and played the melodeon and sang. Ellen loved to go to church there among the dainty foulard dresses and plumy hats of the summer ladies from the Windward House; and to hear the mighty hymns shake the fragile walls of the little church: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty," "The Church's One Foundation," and "The Son of God Goes Forth to War." At Evening Prayer, at five o'clock, when the sinking sunshine came through the colored glass in the windows, and made scarlet and purple spots on people's hair,

it was sweeter than honey in the honeycomb to hear the lovely canticles,

"God be merciful to us and bless us and show us the light of his countenance,"

and

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

✓ Ellen delighted in going to church. It was like a bath, so refreshing and regenerating. Going home from five o'clock church she sometimes felt in a beautiful mood of holiness. Fresh from the delicious church bath, she resolved to keep perfectly clean until next Sunday. Not only would she avoid coarse horrid crimes, but the smallest peccadillo; she would keep perfectly innocent, even to cleaning her finger-nails before each meal, and brushing her teeth three times a day. This Sunday, or amateur, Christianity never lasted over into Monday afternoon; but sometimes throughout Sunday evening and the whole stretch of Monday morning, an air of *noli-me-tangere* surrounded her: her piety was of a thickness that could have been cut with a knife. Priggish as these endeavors were, however, there was that element of life in them, that religious emotions were expected to connect at once with conduct, and even to connect with it rather violently and dramatically.

That hymn "The Son of God Goes Forth to War" was a great love of Ellen's. It was her first love in poetry. It was the first poem she had ever read, and it made the small red hymnbook, which somebody had given her away back in the dim Minneapolis days, more prized than even Longfellow's Poems, or "Tanglewood

Tales." Whenever they sang that hymn in church, she thrilled all over at the thought of the martyrs, who,

"—Met the tyrant's brandished steel,  
The lion's gory mane,  
And bowed their necks the stroke to feel."

Loathing and longing together, she saluted a possible martyrdom in far-off, grown-up days, when she sang

"Who follows in their train?"

"I will," she thought. "I would be afraid to meet a tyrant's brandished steel, a lion's gory mane, but still—I will follow in their train. Sometime I will." It was the old Joan of Arc notion all over again with a Sunday tinge. Goodness knew how long she had had that notion. It dated further back than memory.

This was the stuff of which missionaries are made, out of otherwise quite common clay. Ellen never heard much missionary talk at home, nor were there any missionary books or papers lying about on the marble-topped tables. If there had been, she would have stood them, instead of various tame essays, on the music-rack while she was practicing, and would certainly have offered herself for the foreign field in the course of time.

Saying her prayers was very real. It always had been. It was quite practical, too—morally utilitarian. She went to her prayers very much as one would go to Willets and Barnhaven's store, to get fresh supplies. There was a difference of course in the use you wanted to put your prayer supplies to. There was somebody more interested in your having enough, than you were your-

self. And then it made you feel in a sort of sweet and solemn mood, to lay them in. And then, of course, you didn't have to economize them, because you didn't have to pay for them. It was more like getting seeds from the Government, than like going to Willets and Barnhaven's.

Of course people never talked about such things, it was embarrassing: and curiously enough, it was more embarrassing, generally, to talk about them with your own family, than with other people—Julia Oldenbury, for instance. Jennie Willets never talked about anything really very interesting. She never went on talking about any one thing more than a minute at a time. She asked you what dress you were going to wear, and if you had got your spring cleaning done, and such things, all separate and comparatively uninteresting. With Julia it was entirely different. It never seemed very embarrassing even to talk about saying your prayers, and such things, with Julia. You could be as romantic and intimate as ever you liked.

Julia was good to be intimate and secret with. It was awfully nice to go down and spend a day at the Oldenburys'. They were very far-away cousins of the aunts, but still they called them "Cousin Frances" and "Cousin Sarah." Aunt Fran was most particularly fond of them. She would put on one of her clean flounced black-and-white muslins, and hoist a black parasol and walk the two miles down to the valley on the sultriest August day, to see the Oldenburys. There were, beside Julia, two grown-up single sisters, and two long, lank, grown-up bachelor brothers, who worked their legs and arms almost off, and yet never "got ahead." They never



even got abreast. Still no one ever heard of the Oldenburys being in debt. Their beautiful, unprofitable farm and sugar bush were mortgaged, but not twice. They were not extravagant, either. The sisters wore old-fashioned-looking dresses, with quillings and pipings and fringes and "bugles," out of their garret, when they wished to dress up. For every-day they wore gingham dresses, often ready-made, and when they went raspberrying, or strawberrying, or digging dandelion greens, they wore sunbonnets.

The only extravagance they had was talking. An Oldenbury could always stop, perhaps with a milk-pail in one hand and a stick for an expiring stove in the other, to talk all over the President's message, or the plot of a novel they had had out of the small beginnings of a library in the New Street. They took their talk seriously. Exchange of ideas and criticism of life and people were more important to them than crops. An Oldenbury would not interrupt a brother's or sister's views to say, "Well—tell me some other time—the cows are waiting to be fed." He stood and listened with all his heart, and the cows were fed very late.

The Oldenburys had conversation. All the hard overwork of the brothers without and the sisters within the shabby, paint-peeled, creviced, sagging old house was sweetened and illuminated by it. It lent an enchantment to the threadbare, book-cluttered sitting-room. A surprising number of callers dropped in at the Oldenburys'.

Aunt Fran liked to talk politics with them, especially township politics. But Ellen and Julia went up to the attic, or out to the orchard, where, after shaking the

trees for apples, they forgot to eat them, reading and talking, incessant poetry, egotism, and sentiment. They spouted favorite pieces, and showed each other their own faint imitations of Moore, sickishly sweet and haltingly melodious.

## CHAPTER IV

### YOUNG IDEAS

THE district school was considered, by the lady who wrote "Caste," too rough, wild, and democratic for these superfine Grahams. They had home lessons every morning, on the ell piazza or in the dining-room, according to the season. These consisted of the French verbs, which Aunt Fran imparted by the same head-on method she had learned them by in Madam Emma Willard's famous Troy Female Seminary; a history of the United States which featured all the dismal geography possible, Ellen thought; Dickens's "Child's History of England," which suited her entirely; Greenleaf's Mental Arithmetic; and a particularly hopeless and disgusting geography, worse even than the United States History. These lessons they shared: but Ellen was also instructed in two beguiling little books called respectively Keightley's Mythology and "First Steps in English Literature." Beguiling Keightley was, but exceedingly literal. From him Ellen formed an impression of the pagan gods and goddesses as an indecent and childish collection of Sub-mortals. Luckily this contemptuous notion was corrected a little by "Tanglewood Tales," which showed aspiration and tragedy shining like candles through the colored glass of legend.

Out of lesson hours she read a quantity of good, bad,

and indifferent poetry. Her head was always chiming and reverberating with it. When they went up to get the mail she embarrassed young Jim to an intolerable degree by singing and chanting, in a monotonous and tuneless fashion, all the way. It was all right when she was dusting the parlor: let her sing and roar all she liked, then: unless poor Aunt Sallie, distracted, called out, "Please, Ellen, dearie! I'm writing a letter." But the idea of shouting out "Curfew shall not ring to-night!" or "Roderick vich Alpine, dhu, ho, ieroe!" all along in front of people's houses! She knew by heart the whole Battle of Ivry, and when in her chanting she came to the thousand spurs striking deep, the thousand spears at rest, the glory in her mind was far beyond her brother's power to repress.

Such glory, inexpressible by any other method but a combination of skips and singing, came on apparently from a variety of quite incalculable causes. It blew where it listed. It was oftenest, perhaps, a fit of super-health; the peach and flower of feeling well. At any rate it required better tongues than her own to express. If it were left unexpressed, she might have burst with it. The name she had for it in her own mind was "the blue sky." When it came on, she used to wonder if heaven could be any more delightful, any more enchanting, than this mood. Curious that it should probably be the mere blossom of utterly perfect digestion.

Jimmie may or may not have felt the blue sky. At any rate, he never chanted on the street to express it. Perhaps certain supererogatory monkey-shines may have been the means of letting out, for him, the bursting bliss of being alive.

Aunt Fran liked the children to go everywhere and do everything together. She was always calling one back to wait for the other, and she made them go to bed at the same hour, despite their two years' difference in age. It was natural therefore that she should try to prepare them for entering the Seminary the same year. But Ellen *would* go on faster than Jim. She was ready for the Seminary at thirteen, when he was only eleven. Julia Oldenbury too was going: and reluctantly Aunt Fran concluded by the spring of 1897, that in the fall of that year, Ellen might enter the old school.

O. and O. Seminary had its double name from the joint benefactions of one Owens and one Owsley, by-gone worthies, who lay buried side by side in the Old Street cemetery, with a high, two-legged monument over them. It had long been a favorite subject for "Reveries" and "Reflections" by female students, either in prose or verse, in the Seminary weekly paper, this double grave of the generous old merchants. The school itself was a frowning stone fortress, built for eternity, on the windy tamarack cobble at the far end of the Old Street. Its shutterless, unwinking windows commanded the whole valley like a panorama. Without and within, it was unmitigated, bare, plain, strong, sound, democratic, puritanic, and as bracingly challenging to the imagination as the bare stage scenery of Shakespere's time. The big boys and girls who went there appeared superior beings to the children of the town. The wit and badinage of their Class Day speeches appeared the last word in *bon esprit*. Ellen was not more envious of the long skirts and worldly-wise airs of the Seminary girls, and their romantic absence from parents and home, than Jim was

of the heroes of the ball team, for whom, like all the other little boys in Tory Hill, he was proud to field at the daily practice. In recompense they sometimes called him "kid" and gave him a chew of the communistic spruce gum they tossed from base to base to lubricate their mouths on hot and dusty afternoons. One of the tallest of these youths did Jim the honor to drink, without being invited, a quart or two of sap out of the pail the little boy had hung on the maple tree in front of his aunts' house. To this youth, accordingly, he had unobtrusively attached himself, and now he squared his shoulders and walked with a sort of bounce or spring, as "Peanuts" Edwards did.

Ellen had no particular patron among the Seminary girls. She looked, however, with rather dreamy and idealizing eyes upon them all, and so did Julia Oldenbury. To wear those longer dresses, to walk in a procession to church on Sundays, to be away, for months at a time, from home,—it would be wonderful. To be sure, Julia and Ellen never could aspire to be boarders. They were of the vastly inferior class of day scholars. Julia had one advantage over Ellen. She would carry her lunch to school, and sit on the side steps nibbling it among the other girls. Still, with all deductions, it brought on the blue sky every now and then, just to know that she was going to Olympus, and at this time next year would be an Olympian, entitled to wear a little yellow silk pennant on her jacket, with two black O's linked together on it.

Meantime, on a certain August Friday, the fishman who traveled weekly through the valley vending middle-aged cod and halibut, and as some whispered, contraband

liquor from beneath a false bottom of his smeared and scaly cart, came to the back door at Wakerobin with a limping, laboring, sweating horse which seemed about to fall and die on the cindery driveway. Aunt Fran, coming out with the house pocketbook to buy a cut of cod, stopped, looked, and asked sharply:

"What's the matter with your horse?"

"Why, now, ma'am, he's a leetle lame."

"Lame! I should think so. Ellen, go and call your Aunt Sallie. This horse is in no condition to be worked."

Aunt Sallie took on that sick look of hers as she stood in the kitchen doorway.

"Have you driven that wretched creature all the way up from Bennington?"

"Why—ee, yes, ma'am. He's just a leetle lame. Why—ee, a leetle stiff."

"Twenty miles with a broken hip!"

"Oh no, ma'am, not broken. Kinda stiff. Kinda lame. Why, I wouldn't drive no horse with no broken hip."

"What can we do, Frances?"

"Well, there's one thing we can do, Sarah. We can have salt codfish picked up with potato for dinner to-day. Here, Ellen, you can take my pocketbook into the house. I don't care for any of your goods this morning. You needn't stop here next Friday, either."

Larkum, who had followed the family to the kitchen, heard the belligerence in Miss Frances Mowbray's voice, and began to bark in the shrill staccato of a little dog.

"I wouldn't sell ye no fish, not if you was both starving, and them two ugly young ones o' yourn too," replied

the fishman vindictively as he drove away his wretched beast.

Miss Sarah Mowbray telegraphed to Bennington and found there was a Humane Society there. She telegraphed to the Humane Society, and the Humane Society telegraphed back that when the fishman returned his horse should be taken away from him and shot.

But Miss Sarah thought a good deal about those extra twenty miles the ancient slave must travel to reach the heaven death would be to him. She thought so much about it that she ended by putting a notice in the *Tory Hill Gazette* that week, setting a certain night on which all the people of both Streets were invited to meet with the Misses Mowbray to decide whether to form a Humane Society.

"Put in some more chairs, please do, Aunt Sallie," urged Ellen, full of pleased importance, when the specified evening came. "We've only got chairs for about fifteen!"

Miss Sarah Mowbray smiled.

"I think there'll be plenty of chairs," she said.

There were plenty of chairs. Vermont, once the Wild West of New England, had grown very conservative since the day when Matthew Lyon sat alone with folded arms in the House of Representatives because he would not demean his constituents by going to the White House. Vermont was very cautious and conventional in the nineties, (though it has grown rather radical, again, since); and the idea of a Humane Society was somewhat new, queer, and (perish the thought!) sentimental, perhaps.

One embarrassed clergyman came, and sat on the edge of his chair: an earnest woman or two (one of these with



knuckles red from cleaning all day, and a very tired back, for she kept a boarding-house in the New Street); and one or two others who came had over-frizzled hair and over-trimmed basques. The leaders of well-established old movements: the chief business men and their wives: most of the clergy and professional people, and all the officers of the Ladies' Benevolent Society, were absent. The New Street was better represented than the Old.

Ellen cringed at the frosty air of the meeting. She smarted at the absence of all the representative people, and forgot the fishman's agonizing horse. Indeed she was rather sorry her aunts had called the meeting. It made them queer, to be associated with all these queerish people. Aunt Sallie, however, calmly proceeding, read the Constitution and By-laws of the Bennington society; and the sense of the meeting was, on the whole (and on the part of the tired lady of the boarding-house enthusiastically so) in favor of organizing. Thus the Tory Hill Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was formed. Ellen half-heartedly became a member. She saw her young aunt that night through a mist of as mean, low, snobbish thoughts as ever a good girl had; and the real Aunt Sallie of that evening, all in gleaming armor and riding a snow-white war-horse, she never saw at all. Of so little use to her were all those Joan-of-Arc ideas, to open her kitten-blind eyes to a real Joan of Arc!

What blinded her was largely the absorption of her mind in the prospect of going to the Seminary. A sort of passion to be like other girls, a mortification, intense and almost moral, at being different from them, was always

somewhere present in her consciousness in these days. Next month the Seminary would open. She saw school life ahead flowing with milk and honey. Only to be really a part of it, one must not, above all, be queer or solitary. It was now, for the first time, that she wished she belonged to the Congregational church. Most of her future schoolmates went there. They went to the socials and chicken-pie suppers in the church parlors. They had little delicate ways of talking, many of them, delicate young-ladyfied ways of eating ice-cream, of putting fascinators over their heads. Boys escorted them home. . . . They lived in a world she panted to enter and conform to.

When the day of the school opening came, she put on a blue "French calico" with white rings. It was the longest of her dresses. Still it was a little shorter than she quite liked to wear to the Seminary. It showed an inch of black stocking above her shoes. Her efforts to grow up faster were always being obstructed by her father and aunts. She did really need a longer dress, because she was rather a bean-pole. Though sturdily built, and to that degree comely, she was neither well rounded nor alluring in form. Her waist was flattish, or rectangular. Otherwise she looked quite presentable to herself in the glass that morning. Her hazel eyes were clear, and so was her florid fresh complexion. Her expression was ordinarily open and honest, though subject to *mauvaise honte*. A large, heavy mouth spoiled her modest pretensions to being pretty, of which her abundant fine light hair was the most striking. She paid for it, however, by taffy-colored eyelashes which were almost invisible, and gave her eyes a bald look.

Her excellently fat, solid braid was looped up underneath and tied with a wide black taffeta ribbon. Her face had been washed with soap, and shone accordingly: but not with soap alone.

She had the blue sky as she walked up the hill with Julia Oldenbury, who still looked quaint, in spite of having long since exchanged her white stockings for black ones, and left the net off her hair. Julia talked in that ultra-refined, slightly down-Easterly manner which Tory Hill people called "over the mountain." Ellen had never noticed it until this morning. Now she remembered that all the Oldenburys talked that way. She noticed it because of a habit she had, when about to enter any new company, of looking and listening with their eyes and ears rather than her own. Now she looked at Julia with Seminary girls' eyes, and noticed a variety of new characteristics: how she leaned forward from the hips, delicately swaying, like a lily or a hollyhock, for example.

The blue sky continued, all over and through these surface thoughts, until she and Julia, as they reached the Seminary hill and began to ascend it, almost ran into young Martin Holt, feebly pacing back and forth in front of the old Holt house. He had a stick and seemed to lean on it as he walked. His thin legs seemed lost, like poles, inside his loosely flapping trousers, and the concavity of his chest left great wrinkles in his waistcoat.

Everyone knew that he was far gone, poor boy, with consumption. Ellen herself had often seen him before, and felt sharp pangs of pity, but never before when the blue sky was on her. He struck across the heyday of her youth and strength like a paralysis.

The Puritans are popularly supposed to have frowned on beauty: but whoever has seen a long, one-streeted, elm-arched, grass-swarded New England village, with Inigo Jones's own houses, and Christopher Wren's own church and Town Hall, will be unable to acquit our forefathers of a deep feeling for the beautiful. Owen and Owsley Seminary dated back not quite to Puritan days. The building itself, of gray stone, faced with blue marble, with a blue marble belfry, was not very comely. It was, in fact, almost piteously plain and blank. But its site, at least, had been chosen with the Puritan's keen eye for beauty. It stood on the round top of the hill, and looked over a girdle of woods across and up and down the valley. At the rear, Windward Mountain extended its sugar woods almost to the ball-field.

In the bare, untempered, sun-flooded old north school-room Ellen and Julia sat together, perfecting their former acquaintance into an intimacy. Two greener, more sentimental young damsels never walked down the long Old Street and up the windy hill.

Of all their half-dozen studies they liked Latin best. They liked the formal, inlaid sentences, the resounding heavy words. It was taught, besides, by an ambrosial young man fresh from Middlebury, who was very particular to make all his scholars call Cæsar Ki-sar, and Veni Vidi Vici Wayny Weedy Weekly. English literature was taught by a middle-aged lady who sympathized with their young delight in melodious madrigals of sound unburdened by sense, and left them alone to enjoy such poetry, without harping on the idea that poets ought to think industriously as well as scan deliciously. United States History was to them the forlornest of

studies. The book had evidently been chosen for its dreariness. Everything possible was chopped into mutually exclusive little paragraphs, and each paragraph was numbered like an equation in algebra. The thrilling voyage of Magellan himself, which Fiske made fairly lyric, was drearily and joggingly described by this historian, whom may God forgive. Triolets and rondeaus of Austin Dobson, pieces of delicate, intricate rhyming by Bliss Carman, exchanged by their indefatigable pencils, beguiled away the history hour. One famous day Julia brought up to school the "Dark Rosaleen." She brought the whole nine stanzas in her head, and wrote them out in Ellen's Algebra. Ellen went half mad over it. She chanted "O the Erne shall run red" all over the house until her Aunt Sallie, who had a few nerves, was frantic. Not a lesson did she know on the day after Julia had bestowed the "Rosaleen" upon her.

The Seminary filled her life quite full this year. Above all, there was the excitement of writing for the school weekly, the *Mountain Mirror*. She was always having verses and flowery prose articles, rhapsodical descriptions or wiseacre moralizings, in the *Mirror*,—something every week. Thursday evenings were "Lyceum nights." The *Mirror* was read aloud from the half-moon platform in the north schoolroom, the boys debated, and a girl or two played the piano or sang. Ellen loved the debates and longed to be in them. It was her secret belief that she could debate better than any of the boys.

The Seminary, in short, was altogether satisfactory that first year. The very sense of being in a bunch of girls and boys, after all her individualized home school-

ing, was delicious to Ellen. She liked standing up in the aisle and marching out of the schoolroom in a row with other girls. Sometimes this was so freshly pleasant to her that she smiled all over her broad florid face as she walked out of the worn and barren old north schoolroom. There was a tang, there was a zest, there was a bloom in everything. In October there was always a school holiday, for the purpose of climbing the mountain. It was called Mountain Day. Up Windward through a long torch-light blaze of flaming pink maples, Ellen tugged herself, short-winded, panting, ineffably enjoying herself. She was almost ashamed of enjoying herself so much. It seemed childish. Other people looked soberer and duller than she felt in these onslaughts of happiness.

## CHAPTER V

### FLESHPOTS

BUT in the second year, when she was about fifteen, a faint hazy discontent began to gather. Half-consciously she nourished a grievance against the Seminary. It was not quite keeping its contract with her. It was slyly discriminating against her in favor of other girls. She, and Julia too, were being sent, by imperceptible degrees, along the road to Coventry.

For almost all the girls at the Seminary had boys "crushed" on them. Ellen wanted one. She felt that Julia also needed one; though in a way it was comforting to have a bosom friend in the same plight as yourself. Ellen's own ambition flew rather high. Sooner than any of the big boys, even of the senior class, she would have chosen a teacher. She cast, in fact, bashfully greedy eyes upon her Latin teacher. It was still the ambrosial young Middlebury man who had been here last year. This good-looking young man had dark and soft eyes, and a mellow, though rather expressionless, voice, in which he seemed tenderly reproachful to the girls who did not grasp the ablative absolute. Ellen found it quite sweet and abashing to be reproved by him. Among the boys he was not so popular, perhaps because, with pardonable satisfaction in his own elevated tastes, he used to sit reading Homer under the tamaracks in front of the Seminary on Sundays.

Ellen developed varying devices, some of which in her innocence she thought original with herself, for falling back and deserting Julia when this young teacher came down the hill behind the released scholars in the afternoons. Once or twice she even succeeded in getting him to join her and walk with her as far as the post-office. But often she lagged back and then was too bashful and green to put the coup over when the time came. Sometimes she overdid her labored unconsciousness of his nearness while she was tying her shoe, or looking for violets. She dreamed of his coming down to call; and on winter evenings when the dead clematis vines beat a tattoo on the piazza at Wakerobin, she often thought it was a gentleman's step at the door, and forgot what was trumps in the hope that the door-bell would ring.

The evening games of whist and grabouge were undisturbed, however, by calls from Mr. Scott. Nobody else, either, offered to escort her home from Lyceum, or socials and suppers at the Congregational church. Once she thought a quite young boy, a contemporary of Jim's (who was in the Seminary now himself, and hoping to make the ball-team) was going to escort her, and she felt a warm, grateful glow of affection toward him, until she saw out of the tail of her eye that he had closed into the congregation with a chit as young as himself, and had already, before they were out the church door, offered her his arm.

What in the world was the matter? Did it have anything to do with Julia and herself being bluestockings, as Jim said? Jim said she and Julia were "grinds" and that they "bootlicked the profs."



Ellen wondered and wondered. It was a sign, perhaps, that her intimacy with Julia was bookish rather than personal, that they never talked about this. Or, at least, they only interlarded, among their marginal poems, some occasional insipid remarks about the ambrosial teacher.

“Did you see Mr. Scott look daggers at me just now?”

“Mr. Scott nearly took my head off for not having my indirect discourse written out.”

The most that was said by word of mouth between them was said by Julia one blue and white February day, when Ellen, after school, walked with her a little way along the tightly frozen, squeaky snow of the valley road. Apropos of nothing, Julia remarked:

“I don’t think you’ll ever marry, Ellen. You, some-way, aren’t that kind.”

To sugar-coat it a little, she added:

“You’re too hard to suit.”

Ellen’s feelings were obscurely but deeply wounded, and she made no reply. She was by nature too careful of other people’s feelings to make the obvious reply:

“I don’t think you’ll ever marry, either, Julia.”

However, she chewed the bitter cud of this for some time. She was growing analytical enough to notice that she was disposed to give the lie to Julia’s prophecy, if possible. She found that she wanted to defy and outwit Julia’s opinion of her.

That very term a bearish cousin of Jennie Willets’ came down from Ox River to the Seminary. Ox River was distinguished as the smallest post-office town in Vermont. It had only about six families, aggregating twenty-six or seven souls. Webster Willets was rather handsome, in a rough, wild, scowling style of his own. He had

coarse, black, picturesque, Hibernian hair all brushed up in an angry-looking range along his scornful forehead. His brusque unmodulated voice conveyed a certain amount of crude magnetism. He was just enough whimsical and defiant of other people's ideas to wear a bright cravat of Roman stripes, and to look at a beauless girl like Ellen Graham because nobody else did so. There was also a certain fine, upstanding, pioneer wholesomeness in him.

As soon as Ellen found that he was certainly asking to bring her home from Lyceum on a slushy, rainy night in March, she consented, in a voice full of pleased, half-motherly gratitude. The gratitude was not lost on Webster Willets. He flung the slushy spray high from his enormous boots as he hoisted her umbrella over her, and demanded bluntly:

"Say—be I the first feller that ever saw you home from anywhere?"

The question was deeply mortifying, and therefore Ellen hastened with painful eagerness to answer:

"Yes! You are!"

Then she was half afraid her fierce truthfulness would repulse him; and so she added gratefully:

"It's certainly awfully nice of you; and on such an awful evening!"

"Wawl, that just suits me. I don't want no other feller's leavin's."

This Oriental statement did not at once disgust and outrage Ellen. Instead the female bear in her answered to it. And the fact of being chosen in itself was temporarily heart-satisfying. Until now she had hardly realized what an outsider she had been at the Seminary.

Now she could hold up her head. She not only had a boy, but a big, stalwart, self-sufficient fellow, who neither ground at his books nor "bootlicked the pros." The only thing was, that Julia had not yet secured a beau. On the next morning after the Lyceum, somebody among the younger scholars so far reverted to district school etiquette as to write on the blackboard in a fine flowing hand:

"Webster Willets and Ellen Graham."

Ellen professed to see this for the first time when Julia nudgingly pointed it out to her. She professed extreme indignation and lofty scorn, and in the most maidenly-hypocritical fashion hid and hugged the lively pleasure it gave her.

Her cheeks were quite scarlet.

Jim showed, in a way, that he considered her vindicated. He consulted her about his part in the debate on the next Lyceum night. This was a famous night for Ellen. Jim made a spirited plea for arbitration. The aunts were both there and saw him in his glory. The burning flush of joyful excitement came up in Ellen's cheeks, and in her heart eclipsed that old dewy cool sweetness of the blue sky. Over and over, like strophe and anti-strophe, sounded in her inward ears:

"Jim is debating splendidly!

"Webster Willets will see me home!"

The fly in her amber was the sight of Julia, in her blue best dress, sitting all alone, gentle, uncomplaining, showing even a mild pleasure in the debate, though she had no brother there winning applause, and no boy to see her home.

She did wish Julia had *somebody*. Rudimentary ideas of a matchmaking character began to float through her mind. Art and skill in drawing other people together, however, she not only had none, but she lacked the very conception of such a thing, and she lacked also the essential boldness for such an attempt. It came down at last to an attempt to persuade Jim to be Julia's escort "every once in a while" as Ellen vaguely phrased it, to church suppers and Lyceum.

Jim, however, not only refused, he stared and wondered.

"What're you talking about?" he cried.

"Jim, I do wish you would! Julia never has anybody to take her home from anywhere."

"What's the matter with Romeo?"

"Well, she'd like it better if it was somebody else than her own brother. Besides, Romeo might like to see some other girl home. Besides, he's nowhere near Julia's age."

"Age! Age your grandmother! If she wants a fellow let her find one for herself. I'm not going to be tagged around by any girl, and especially not by one that's got two brothers of her own."

Ellen had had small hopes of him, anyhow. But now there began to rise in her mind some doubts about the great desirability of having a boy crushed on one. It had a few drawbacks, and even was unpleasant, in certain aspects. There were times when she was thoroughly weary of Webster. He did not speak very good grammar. Aunt Fran didn't like him. Aunt Sallie was afraid of him. She was afraid, that is, that Ellen would become "interested" in him. She had not said so to

Ellen, but to Aunt Fran one night when Aunt Fran had an attack of acute indigestion, and lights were burning all night. Aunt Fran had said Aunt Sallie was a fuss-budget. Ellen had overheard them.

Curiously enough, this excessively unromantic experience did her good; and something connected with it added a little beauty to her looks. Her hazel eyes had always been candid and kind, but now they had a sweetness in them; perhaps it was a species of humility. More and more she found Webster's cocksure, overbearing personality unattractive; less and less did she admire his masterful talk. It was only when the eyes of the school were upon them that she was able now to take real pleasure in his attentions. Alone with him she found him decidedly a burden.

Exactly how much damage to the blue sky he had done was a question there was no particular reason for thinking of at this time.

The damage was slyly done, if at all. He did not come back the next term; and the pleasantest thing Ellen had to think about him was:

"Well, I've shown that I *could* have somebody."

In her third winter at the Seminary, when she was studying Roman history and reading Cicero, girls began to be included in the Lyceum debates. Her old, confident ambition to join the boys in debating gave way suddenly to what Jim called "cold feet" when she discovered that she was down on the programme for the next Thursday evening, as a principal in the proposed debate on woman suffrage. Aunt Fran was delighted; and luckily Ellen was assigned to the popular side. Though who among the carefully brought up girls at

O. and O. could be found to defend the unpopular side, and "make themselves masculine" by asking for the vote, the teachers were still trying to arrange.

Jim said:

"Better come up and hear 'em, Aunt Fran. You like a shindy. 'Twon't be very parliamentary, I bet. Instead of saying 'My honorable opponent,' they'll all be pulling hair and sticking their tongues out at each other."

When Ellen came home next day she said the subject for the debate had had to be changed, because Jennie Willets's mother wouldn't let her take the suffrage side, and none of the other girls that were eligible were willing.

"What's the subject to be then?" asked the aunts.

"Vivisection."

"Oh!" said Aunt Sallie suddenly.

"And Ellen was lucky again," said Jim. "She's on the side in favor, where everybody wanted to be."

"In favor, Ellen?" asked Aunt Sallie, with a look a little like that sick sort of look she had had when the fishman's horse leaned against the shafts and panted.

Ellen then remembered that ever since the Tory Hill S.P.C.A. had been formed, at that dismal meeting of nonentities, and Aunt Sallie had been made secretary of it, humane societies and anti-vivisection societies had been sending her packages of leaflets and little magazines; the old red desk upstairs was bulging with them. She said:

"I don't see how you, or anybody else, can be against vivisection, Aunt Sallie. Why, if human beings' lives, and especially children's, can be saved by killing animals——"

“Torturing, Ellen!”

Ellen paused a moment over that ugly, melodramatic word, of which she felt skeptical, in spite of Aunt Sallie's evident belief. Her convictions, however, were strong, and she finally said, with a sense of conceding something unnecessary to concede (most unlikely that there was really anything you could honestly call torture!):

“Even by torturing, then; still I think it's right.”

Aunt Sallie said nothing further, to Ellen's disappointment, for she loved to argue on and on, hot, flushed, and edgy as it always made her. Aunt Fran inquired:

“Who took the opposition side?”

“Why, Jennie Willets was willing to take it; said her mother wouldn't care, and she'd just as lieves: the teachers needn't draw: but what do you think? Julia Oldenbury spoke up and said she'd like it! I never was so surprised.”

“Julia Oldenbury, hey?” said Aunt Sallie.

Ellen saw her young aunt, an hour or two later, seated at the red desk, sorting over those humane society and anti-vivisection pamphlets, and cutting clippings out of them.

In the evening Ellen got out the last volume of the Encyclopedia Britannica, and took notes for the debate. The teachers had also furnished her with a magazine article or two, and one or two statements in pamphlet form, issued by medical bodies. One of these described vivisection as involving mere pin-pricks, always done under anæsthesia: the typical experiment was described as “a scratch on the tail of an etherized mouse.” Ellen felt that this disposed effectually of any echoes of

Aunt Sallie's sick word, "Torture!" which might still be reverberating in her mind. How silly dear Aunt Sallie was, to make such a fuss!

"Where are you going, Sarah?" inquired Aunt Fran that evening of Aunt Sallie, who was pinning her hat on in the hall.

"Up street."

"Oh. What have you got in that package, for goodness' sake?"

Aunt Sallie made no answer.

Aunt Fran had a tigerish way of jumping at conclusions and striking them amidships.

"Sarah Mowbray, have you gone and made up a package of information to help Julia Oldenbury in that debate?"

"Yes, I have."

"I think that's a pretty mean way to treat our Ellen!"

"No, it isn't, Aunt Fran—you go ahead and send 'em, Aunt Sallie. Oh dear, I almost wish they'd never put girls into the debate at all!"

"Oh, Ellen! If you were only on the other side!" Aunt Sallie said wistfully.

"That's all very well," cried Aunt Fran, "but she isn't on the other side. She's on the side she's on. I should think you'd hate to work against her, poor motherless child! I should think you'd think of your poor sister Mary in her grave, and take your coat and hat off, and put that stuff away in your desk again!"

"Don't you do it, Aunt Sallie—you go ahead and send it to Julia. I respect Aunt Sallie all the more, Aunt Fran, for sticking to her colors."



"Yes—uphold her in it if you want to," said Aunt Fran bitterly. She would say no more: and Ellen's heart ached worse for her than for Aunt Sallie.

"Well, Ellen——" Aunt Sallie began, and then stopped. Ellen got up from where she sat before the stove, and held her young aunt's coat for her. Aunt Sallie's slender arms trembled so that she could hardly get them into the sleeves. Aunt Fran, seated deep in the sleepy-hollow chair in the corner, trembled too: Ellen could see her stout body shake.

"Why didn't you give that package to me on the q.t., Aunt Sallie, and I'd have handed it to Julia in school?" Ellen asked her young aunt next day.

Aunt Sallie only shook her head, with tears in her tender, shadowy gray eyes.

Ellen rehearsed in the barn every afternoon, trying to sharpen her points and boil down her periods. Both aunts said they were going up to hear her: but when the evening came, Aunt Sallie had neuralgia in her teeth, and stayed home. Aunt Fran said, what was more true than kind, that whenever anything special was going on, her sister always became ill. Aunt Sallie was occasionally subject to neuralgia. The only queer thing was that tonight she didn't, as usual, lie down on the sofa and put the hot-water bag under her cheek.

The female debaters did not pull hair, or call out, "Shut up!" and "That's a lie!" as the boys had largely bet on their doing. More Seminary money would have changed hands if there had been more takers. Aunt Fran sat there looking portly, handsome and motherly, and for the time being lost her own convictions, which were not Ellen's, in beaming pride.

“Resolved, that vivisection of animals for the purpose of saving human life is justifiable.”

Ellen made a good appearance on the half-moon platform of the bare old north schoolroom. She recapitulated the elaborate precautions against pain described in the magazine articles with which the teachers had furnished her; the almost invariable and complete anæsthesia, the grateful affection the animals showed for their kind experimenters; and she asked, with a show of dramatic feeling (which she really felt, for she thought of Jim) how many mothers present would let their children die, out of mistaken sympathy for a rabbit which suffered not half as much as those same children suffered when they had their teeth pulled?

Julia Oldenbury gave some terrible accounts of dogs whose backs were broken, whose paws were crushed, and burnt, under incomplete anæsthesia, in the Bunsen flame. She said the eyes of animals were purposely inflamed, and ulcers cultivated in them.

Ellen and her assistants, in rebuttal, quoted some Harvard Medical School professors to the effect that such “lists of atrocities” “never existed”; and sat down amid applause.

In surrebuttal Julia and her assistants said that the cruelties they had quoted were described in print by the experimenters themselves. They went on to tell some ghastly things which had been done by French and Italian scientists; but the feminine part of the audience began to put its fingers in its ears. When they told of some of the implements used in laboratories, they held up horrible pictures and said they were copied from the experimenters’ own illustrations. There was evidently a

revulsion of feeling. The tide wavered toward the anti-vivisection side: but Ellen, in her closing speech, conceded the bare possibility "in rare, very rare cases" of extreme and prolonged pain: even perhaps, to highly organized beings such as dogs: only adding, in a low and honestly trembling voice:

"Which of us would hesitate to save a life which was very dear to us, even at that cost?"

It was perhaps that exaggerated solicitude she always felt about illness, and the true and terrible feeling it gave her voice, that won the debate. She was cheered and complimented, and was full of hot, splendid, proud, and feverish joy. She knew that her soft, fair cheeks were always beautifully red when this burning blood surged in them. Her hands were as cold as ice. The gold debating medal was pinned on her dark dress. The kind English teacher smiled, and praised her, though she had seen Ellen looking much nicer and happier on quiet days in class.

Jim was certainly pleased in his taciturn way. Ellen sensed his feeling when he gave her, next day, some snow apples he had gone a considerable distance to steal, and shinned up a spruce tree in the Ledge Woods to get her some gum.

That Friday afternoon Jim was scheduled to paint the kitchen steps before he went up for the mail. He tossed off some smeared and spotted newspapers and catalogues which had been covering the paint pots, in the bay of the barn: and they fluttered loosely among the oddments of lath and moldings heaped there miscellaneously to be broken up for kindlings. One paint-spattered page blew out into the orchard, where Ellen was picking up green

greenings for apple sauce. It fluttered into a choke-cherry thicket, whence her omniverous bookworm's eye and hand reclaimed it, to see what it was about. It was entitled in large letters:

“GUIDED BY SCREAMS.”

It went on to say in somewhat smaller headlines:

“RABBIT'S SCREAM OF PAIN THE INDEX WHERE  
TO CUT THE NERVE.”

## CHAPTER VI

### BUT THE HEART MUST OFTEN CORRECT THE FOLLIES OF THE HEAD

WELL, so this was one of the fairy-tales, such as Julia had quoted. Queer that people should invent such horrors, out of whole cloth. But some people's imaginations ran to such things. Besides, they wouldn't need to manufacture them quite out of whole cloth, either. They would only need to cut out here, and put in there. There were asterisks in this very pamphlet:—no doubt where anæsthetics had been mentioned in the original! Only—it quoted some professor—who had become an adept in this experiment, or so the pamphlet claimed,—as advising students to perform it *without* anæsthetics, because the shriek of pain was a good guide. *That* part must have been made up out of whole cloth, naturally! No professor surely ever advised young men to do things like that.

Of course she had said in the debate, that even if vivisection *did* involve torture—— “But I didn't figure out to myself what *kind* of torture,” thought Ellen, perplexedly. “Now that I come to think about picking out one particular cat or dog or rabbit, saying to myself, ‘Well, I guess we'll turn over *this* one to be tortured,’ and then choosing what particular place on its body to hurt first——”

How soul-satisfying it would be to find out for sure,

rock-sure, that there wasn't a word of truth in this ghastly tale! And by the way, there was one thing she could do: write to the professor who had done it—or rather, who hadn't. She could get her letter in by five o'clock. By Monday morning she could hear, if the professor were prompt about answering.

"Aunt Fran, I'm leaving those apples, because I have to write a letter and get it in the evening mail."

"All right. Stop in at Willets and Barnhaven's and bring me a yeast cake."

She wrote her letter and started for the post-office. It seemed a considerable step to take, somehow, this going to headquarters to get your own material for your own original thinking. All the stars were twinkling out in the early autumn evening. She looked at them, and not at the lights in Willets and Barnhaven's store.

Across the street, before you come to the post-office, old Dr. Temple's side door, the office door, was open: somebody was just going in. Why wouldn't Dr. Temple know about this professor, and this experiment—whether it were true or not?

Somehow Ellen shrank a little from opening the subject with the doctor. She crossed the street, however, instead of going to the post-office. A little while she stood and pondered before the side door, with its scratched and flaked gilt letters, "A. V. Temple, M.D." When she did ring, the door was not at once opened. Murmurs of conversation continued for a time. Then the doctor came and let her in, and introduced her to his other caller, a younger man, with a frank and friendly eye, who wasn't a patient, it appeared, but another doctor, from Rutland.

Ellen burst out with her errand, to get it over with.

"Dr. Temple, did you ever hear of Merwin Hood, and did he, do you suppose, ever divide the fifth nerve of animals, and advise medical students to do the same thing, without anæsthetics? I *must* know because I won the debate——"

"What've you been getting into, hey, Ellie? Anti-vivisection?"

"Sounds like their stuff," said the younger man.

"Yes," said Ellen. "Is it true, do you think? Or don't you know? Do *you* know?" she added, turning to the stranger.

"Merwin Hood's retired long ago," said the stranger. "That's old stuff you've come across. Though I suppose the A-V's keep an old charge going till it drops dead of old age."

"Then he *did* say it? And do it?" pressed Ellen anxiously.

"Oh, I hardly think," began Dr. Temple, "why, Ellie, I hardly think so. Hood was a very humane man. Research workers generally are. You can trust the doctors pretty generally, you'll find. I certainly never saw any of these atrocities when I was in medical school. I never take much stock in 'em."

"What *was* your medical school?" inquired the other.

"Albany. I graduated in the class of 1870——"

"But can't either of you tell me for sure, one way or the other?" interrupted Ellen desperately. She turned her honest, baffled face again to the stranger.

"Why—as I say, I've never had any occasion to use that text-book of Hood's. It's all out of date."

"Well, how am I going to find out?"

She did not ask this question aloud, but it was clearly spoken in her expression of perplexed perseverance, as she turned away toward the door. The younger man suddenly got up and crossed the room. He took down a book off Dr. Temple's top shelf and came and laid it open on the table.

"Here's Hood's book—let's look and see," he said.

Ellen's dark-red color rushed into her face. She pulled the paint-smeared pamphlet out of her pocket.

"Where's it tell us to look? Oh yes, Chapter Five, page one-twenty-nine."

On page one-twenty-nine were directions for dividing the fifth nerve of rabbits, and students were advised not to use anæsthetics.

All the time Ellen and the strange doctor were verifying the quotation, Dr. Temple stood still by his desk, ruffling his long, Lincolnish, untidy hair.

"Well," said the strange doctor, "there it is."

There was a little silence, Dr. Temple gravely regarding the lamp, the book, and the two faces. Ellen not only felt that he was waiting for her to go, but also suddenly remembered the yeast cake, and that Willets and Barnhaven might be shut up by this time: and it seemed to her, with that absurd confusion of values our "practical" philosophy instils, that she had been reprehensibly trifling away time which should have been spent in the stern business of life.

Dr. Temple followed her into the hallway. "Better let the vivisection business alone, Ellie," he said, with that beautiful gentleness so welcome to the weak, so irksome to the strong, and to those who think themselves strong. "Vivisection has come to stay: it's one of the



disagreeable things of the world, like slaughtering hogs. You like ham? There may be abuses," he went on, not waiting for Ellen's reluctant, prompt, "Yes, I do." "We doctors will try to get those corrected, at the same time that we work the animals for all they're worth, to get at the secrets of Nature and the cause of sickness.—And the cure. The whole thing's *our* business—you trust *us*. Don't bother your—head (plainly he had been going to say 'little head') about it. You're too young. Go after the fur trade:—*there's* something anæsthetics *never* get used in!"

He turned back to the waiting-room, and his other visitor there, before Ellen had shut the door tight. Her sleeve caught on the framework of the lock, which tore it a little. She let herself half in again, to disentangle it, and heard Dr. Temple saying:

"Well, you've robbed the child of a night's rest, Dunbar."

"I couldn't disappoint her, Dr. Temple. We talk a whole lot about the disinterested search for truth, and then when we see a kid like that fairly burning up to get at the truth, we try to jolly her away from it."

"I oughtn't to listen," said Ellen perfunctorily to herself, making no move to go.

"Do you want research in this country hampered as it is in England, Dunbar?"

"No! I want it absolutely free, whatever pain it involves. If boiling dogs alive will help cure cancer, I say, go on, boil dogs alive. (I'd shoot my own dog first, of course, and I'd specialize in something else myself.) But by the same token I say, let the public in, let 'em know all about it——"

"And let 'em stop it, perhaps!" put in Dr. Temple.

"Stop it if they want to: it's their business. If they don't want to be cured by anything but S.P.C.A. methods, let 'em say so."

"I mustn't listen," thought Ellen again, "and I *must* get that yeast cake." But she waited to hear Dr. Temple's reply, which made her smile:

"Let loose on the adult public then, Dunbar, but don't go exciting children's nerves."

She went down the steps tearing up the letter she had written to Professor Hood.

It was one of the really great events of Ellen's life, the next greatest after the hunt for the tarantula, this finding of the soiled pamphlet in the choke-cherry bushes, and what it led to. Approaching changes of mind, while they had to fight all the ingredients of her leathery constancy—not to call it obstinacy—received from her imaginative and kindling disposition a sort of welcome, nevertheless. They gave her also a pleasurable excitement and self-importance. They were opportunities to take yourself seriously *ad lib.* whereas the aunts had got into a great habit lately of advising her *not* to take herself so seriously, and not to look so wise and old.

It was, however, rather a nauseous dose to come round to the side of your elders, and acknowledge that thirties and forties had been right where cocksure teens had been wrong. Would it be, perhaps, a bad precedent to set to thirties and forties? Parents who hesitate about acknowledging that they have been mistaken forget the force of example. Little do they reflect that young people hesitate about the same thing from precisely the

same reason, and obscurely and instinctively argue, on their side, in the same way.

"Next time I disagree with them, perhaps they'll throw this up to me, and say I'd better not be so sure, since I've changed my mind before."

This was of course the most repugnant point about the whole matter. But it was only a part of the whole unpleasant business of admitting you had been wrong. Though not so difficult to admit to the school as to the aunts, still it would be difficult and disagreeable to admit it to the school. There was no use talking, it was all disagreeable. How were you ever to be sure about anything? "I was so *perfectly* sure about vivisection, and here I've got completely unsettled, just from finding out how sickening it is. All the arguments are just the same they always were! The only thing is that I can't possibly stand for it another minute!" Intellectually the sensation of being blown about by every wind of doctrine seemed to be as prostrating as palpitation of the heart is to the body.

Well, anyway, if you *did* change your mind, you might as well admit it. What would be the use of keeping it covered up? If it was changed, it was changed. There was no more use in keeping it to yourself than there was in silly old ladies not telling their age. It couldn't make them a minute younger, to have people not know how old they were.

So much was settled by tea-time. Ellen's eyes were dark, fixed, and brooding at tea. She was holding up the pamphlet before herself as Moses held up the brazen serpent in the wilderness. Aunt Fran, turning with fond, fatuous pride to look again at the debating medal

which Ellen, as winning chief, was entitled to wear for two weeks, missed it from the flat front of the plaid dress. When she said, "I hope for Heaven's sake you haven't lost it, Ellen," Ellen pushed away her plate and said:

"No, but I don't know but what I wish Julia had won the debate after all."

Soon she excused herself and went upstairs to her own room. "Why don't I read the Bible?" she wondered, looking dully at her Bible on the whatnot. "It might help." All the time the dry voice inside of her kept saying, "'Facts are the angels of the Lord.' Facts are a Bible. If you have to change your mind, you have to. No amount of sneaking and skulking round it can make you think the way you thought before. You wish you'd never found the paper, eh? What good would *that* do? The rabbits would have been tortured just the same whether you'd found the paper or not. A great deal of help it would have been to *them*, wouldn't it, if you'd never found the paper?"

The dry voice would sometimes stop, and at last she did begin reading the Bible. An obscure inspiration, as usual, gradually growing clearer, came out of its pages. Thousand-fold familiar passages took on a symbolism and applied directly to her small case. The mighty metaphors, the grand language, did not tickle a misdirected sense of humor as applied to herself and her affairs. She could take St. Paul's majestic verses for her adolescent moral problems without any sense of incongruity. The deep utilitarianism of her religion made the Bible not at all "too bright and good" for all and any of her needs.

"Who follows in their train? I will."

Extremely earthly considerations, according to their custom, now threw in their weight. The school would stare, but it would admire. People would certainly respect her for giving back the medal. In some ways, it would be finer than winning it. Dimly she felt perhaps a moral rehabilitation in having tried to decide to give the medal back before she had considered what her schoolmates would think of her. With that two-edged imagination of hers and habit of looking through the eyes of others, she felt a need for such rehabilitation. It now gave her a sense of reality, of being, she hoped, true blue, fast blue, instead of the chameleon colors of her schoolmates' spectacles.

By morning light she decided not to tell the aunts until afterward. There would be nothing very dramatic in telling them, to atone for the lameness of the admission that she had changed her mind and embraced their opinions. Then, too, Aunt Fran might say she hardly thought it wise to give the medal back. Her resolution did seem fast blue, but she had a wholesome fear of having cold water thrown on it. And then one could tell things a great deal better at tea, or after tea, than at breakfast.

At the hasty family prayers on Monday morning, when Jim (it was his week) read the Psalm that says "My tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth," Ellen thought it an apt description of her own situation. She had resolved, however, in any case, on handing the Principal a note, rather than making a small speech to him and the school. She had used her best monogrammed paper. On the envelope she had written with her bold stub pen, "*Immediate.*"

Now that the time had come, the excitement was really rather pleasant than otherwise. The color came up blazingly in her cheeks when the wondering Principal read her note first to himself, then to the school. She thought on the whole, it sounded quite striking in literary form as well as morally noble. It read:

“Since the debate on Thursday night I have changed my mind about vivisection. I regret that my opponents did not win. Having discovered that there is intense cruelty connected with vivisection I would not defend it for worlds. I have become an anti-vivisectionist, and I am determined to fight against the torture of animals in the name of science so long (how like Ellen this flourish!) so long as my life shall last.”

Inclosed in the note was the debating medal.

“Probably I feel a little bit like Cranmer when he held his hand in the fire,” she thought. Following this idea the Joan of Arc notions all came back, as big as life. Some brave, dangerous, desperate action she would do, some day, for some great cause. Perhaps for this! Telemachus had leaped into the arena and ended the gladiatorial combats. A person who gave her own body to be vivisected might in like manner forever end vivisection. “Who follows in their train?” It would be a good many years away, of course, this fearful but beautiful martyrdom. She would have time to cultivate her courage. The martyrs of Cranmer’s time had nourished each other’s resolution by lending each other books in which they had underlined passages that helped a man to think steadily of the fire.

"Ellen Graham will please go to the board and demonstrate the next four equations."

It took much more than equations to oust the Joan of Arc ideas from Ellen's mind this time. It took a combination of Jim's stoop, and shamefaced sidewise cough. (Sometimes in walking through the cemetery for a short cut, she came unawares on Martin Holt's damp sunken grave, where the white violets grew in the grass in the spring.)

Often at breakfast Aunt Fran would say, with a poor attempt not to speak anxiously:

"Another egg, Jim?"

"No place to stow it away, Aunt Fran."

"Why, where's your appetite?"

"Appetite's all right, I guess."

A few such conversations as this disposed effectually of Ellen's own hearty breakfast appetite. Jim's collar, she thought, looked loose round his neck. How he did stoop! Aunt Fran had mixed up the old iron, potash, and glycerine tonic which the children had both taken after whooping cough and measles; but it didn't seem to help very much. Dr. Temple, more heavy faced, frowning, and deliberate than ever, felt Jim's chest and back with his coarse, deft, gentle hands, and said he was all right, but would better take Scott's Emulsion for a few weeks. The name of this excellent tonic was in itself enough to alarm Ellen to an agonizing degree. She thought it very strange, though fortunate, that her brother did not himself bestow much thought on his ailment, but followed the college football in the *Censor* with his usual absorption, and merely sickened at the taste of the Emulsion, gulping it down with horrid grunts. Ellen lay awake in the

middle of the frosty autumn nights for two or three hours, regularly, sweating with fear. All the pomps and colors of the autumn, the season she liked best, went by unseen. Or at least they were only seen on those occasional days when she did not notice Jim coughing at all, and when he ate two eggs for breakfast. Then she tossed every ghastly foreboding into a bonfire, and enjoyed to the full the intoxicating weather of the mountain fall.

One reason why she had always liked the autumn weather so much perhaps was because a poignant sense of the coming absence from home always enhanced it. It was in winter that the aunts shut up Wakerobin and went off to New York for that inevitable exile of a month or six weeks, by which they seemed to set so much store. Regularly in December a seamstress came to furbish up the three feminine wardrobes for this purgatorial trip. She brought fashion magazines with her, and stayed night and day, for a week at a time, handing out seams to be overcast, braids to be sewed on hems, and sleeves to be stitched in. Thank goodness the fiber chamois skirt linings were out of fashion at last; but the enormous pleated sleeves, two yards round, had gone back to skin-tight ones, or bishop's (so called), which bulged grudgingly, as if allowing for wrists to be swollen by hornets' stings. It was a welcome distraction this year, having the seamstress come. It was a rest to center one's mind, even for a few hours, on clothes, and get it out from under that millstone of trouble about Jim. Ellen took up the latest issue of "Style" to choose a pattern for her new winter dress: but forgot the dress entirely in an interesting article at the back of the magazine. She sat down on the sewing-machine cover and read it: an illus-



trated account of life at various girls' colleges. She had heard of Wellesley and Smith and Vassar and Bryn Mawr, but not much of Barnard or Radcliffe, with which this article also dealt. All these pictures of girls in cap and gown were very attractive. She had hardly thought of college until now. It seemed very alluring. In a year from the next June she would have finished her Seminary course. Radcliffe was the feminine Harvard, and the great names of early American literature overshadowed it. It would be well to find out something more about Radcliffe; among other things, how near it was to the fabulous gates of Harvard.

When Jim came in that afternoon, he was coughing. He looked extra slender in his dark-blue suit: or did Ellen punish the traitorous interest she had taken that day in Radcliffe by thinking so? At all events, she felt a horrified remorse and a sharpened anxiety. When she went to bed, instead of regularly saying her prayers, she attempted to bargain with the Almighty.

"Let me not ever go to college, and let Jim get well."

This seemed so poor an offer for the prize of Jim's recovery that she changed it on the spot.

"O God, let me be disappointed in love, and let Jim get well."

After all being disappointed in love did not seem much of a bid, either; especially after that usual ghastly imaginative rioting in charnel houses from twelve to three. She must make the stakes a good deal higher. Accordingly when she said her prayers next morning she prayed:

"O God, let me die of cancer, and let Jim get well."

("And anyway," she reflected, "I can commit suicide if I suffer very much.")

"Ellen's getting to be very viewy," remarked Jim one day. "She'll be out for women's rights soon, cutting off her hair and putting on bloomers and going on the lecture platform."

"I *am* NOT in favor of women's rights, either!" shouted Ellen indignantly.

"Well, she's been going round getting people to sign that anti-vivisection petition, and telling everybody she doesn't believe in hell," Jim amplified, addressing his remarks to Aunt Fran.

"Tennyson didn't believe in hell, and neither did Whittier," said Ellen. "But then, I gave up believing in it before I knew they didn't," she added with rather priggish satisfaction.

"Well, it's all right if she doesn't make herself conspicuous," conceded Jim in a middle-aged tone.

Ellen *was* rather viewy, and suspected herself of being so, hard as she might kick against the conviction. She couldn't help making up her mind as soon as possible, on one side or the other, about every moral question that came her way. Until her mind *was* made up, she would be fidgety and restless within, and almost physically out of sorts. And even after she had come to a decision, she was inexpressibly uncomfortable, if she did not dare to speak out and champion her beliefs against all comers. And yet she could not argue without faceburn, and spinal shivers, and other disconcerting signs of excitement.

These beliefs of hers, too, were generally radical. She had been in the throes of acquiring a new one this very

summer. But it was one she did not dare say very much about. It was more serious than giving up believing in hell.

The succession of daughters of a single prolific French-Canadian family, who had in turn filled the kitchen at Wakerobin, was over. The last and youngest of them was married. In her place had come a gentle, refined, rather brooding young colored girl. Marie-Louise, Sophie, and Zaideé had had plenty of young company, plenty of dances and picnics to go to: and Ellen at their successive weddings had glimpsed a gayer, brighter world than even the frolicsome, talkative set Aunt Sallie moved in. With Carrie it was sorely different. There were colored bell-boys at the hotel, colored coachmen during the season, who brought their wives and families to town: there were colored children in the district school, and one or two at the Seminary. Carrie, however, had no callers: and would often sit dreaming (none too happily, to judge by her great brooding eyes) over her sewing.

Ellen used to linger and look at her sometimes, and wonder, with a sense of awe, whether Carrie could have been disappointed in love. There never seemed to be any opening for her to say anything: but once she resorted to her father's old expedient of pats, and patted Carrie on the shoulder softly, as she passed her. Turning, with the white sweeping-towel pinned round her closely-fastened hair, showing the fine outlines of her head, which the towel Orientalized, Carrie looked for a moment at Ellen's honest, troubled eyes, and smiled uncertainly. There was something immediately established between them, some vague footing of friendship above

and beyond the usual good-natured status between maid and young people in a household. The thing that amplified this small beginning was, oddly enough, Ellen's provoking habit of being often a little late for dinner. On a fine September morning, when school had only been keeping a week, she had gone up into the woods with Julia Oldenbury after school: and forgetting the time in a more unprincipled manner than usual, found the table cleared when she got home, the dishes washed and put away, and a cold bite left for her in lonely fashion on the pantry shelves. She felt aggrieved at the solitude, and her woodland appetite began to dwindle away. How she *hated* eating alone!—Even a knife to spread her bread had been forgotten. She picked up a steel pantry knife from the table, idly thinking, "This is Carrie's knife." Almost as soon as she had picked it up, she laid it down. A horrid thought ran all over her like fire in prairie weed.

"A thousand meals a year all alone at the pantry table! If I mind one so much, what must a thousand be to Carrie!"

She seemed to see, as in a new sort of composite photograph, Carrie eating all at once her thousand yearly solitary meals;—a thousand slices of bread, a thousand balls of butter, consumed in ticking solitude in the lonely pantry. There she was herself at the pantry table, eating those thousand solitary meals. She saw Carrie's pantry knife and fork and cup and chair through Carrie's liquid, pensive eyes. And all at once, as if in a burst of second sight, it seemed to her intolerably vulgar, intolerably small-minded, to have Carrie, or Sophie, or Zaideé, or anybody, eat all alone in the pantry.

She remembered, too, how unaccountably startled Carrie was when steps or voices came suddenly up on the kitchen piazza, and how she had laughed at certain queer fancies Carrie seemed to take seriously. One of these was that she had seen Aunt Fran's face growing smaller and smaller, and then larger and larger, as she stood beside the range. Another was that there were steps along the garret rafters in the middle of the night; and that whenever she heard them there, tin pans and dishes would be on the wrong shelves in the morning. Perhaps these notions came from being so much alone; for people said prisoners often went insane in solitary confinement.

At any rate, there ensued two or three of those days Ellen was getting to know so well, when a disturbing moral question cut across her usually quiet mind, and she had not yet found any action possible to take to dree its weird. It was not a deep, sick sorrow like her fear for Jim; it was only a ferment working anxiously. Aunt Fran, with her paper on American Caste before the Shakespere Society;—Aunt Sallie with her blazer-wearing, tennis-playing friends from the hotel, and her pleasantly indolent, gentlemanly young men on Sundays and holidays—they would give short shrift to a proposal to have Carrie in at the dining-room table at least once a day!

There seemed nothing better to do about it than the remote resolve, "When I am married and have a house of my own, I shall have the maid sit down with me and my husband and children at the dining-room table."

At first this resolution wore rather a severe and grim-

jawed look. It wouldn't be very cosy to have the maid always at the table.

"But it would be cosier," she said to herself determinedly, "than to think of her out in the pantry, all alone, as if she had smallpox."

Gradually, however, it grew into a very rosy, pleasant notion, a vision of old-timey rural America redivivus, without either imported or home grown caste. In her dreams of herself as the mother of a big, jolly family of children, she saw a warm and generous household, where nobody was left out of anything.

A better idea came one evening when the aunts had gone to tea with Mr. and Mrs. Barnhaven. Jim was consulted, and said he had no particular use for doing anything that you had to do on the q.t. Why not leave things alone, anyway? Why be always doing something queer, that nobody else ever thought of? Ellen took time to reconsider her idea, but ended by sticking to it. It was better, she vaguely knew, to deceive the aunts, than to let Carrie keep on being so lonely and getting so fanciful and scary. She went out to the kitchen before tea and said:

"Carrie, you come right in and have supper with Jim and me in the dining-room."

"Oh my mercy, no, Miss Ellen!"

"Yes, sir, you come right in. I won't have you having supper all alone, when *I'm* in charge of this house!"

"I rather not, Miss Ellen. I rather have my supper in the pantry, honest and true."

"What makes you so obstinate, Carrie?"

"I 'fraid Miss Frances fine out."

"No, she won't either. You come right in."

"I rather not, honest and true, Miss Ellen."

"Well! all right then. Jim and I'll come out and eat with you."

Snatching a tray off the shelf to go and bring out the tea things, Ellen was surprised to find Carrie suddenly kissing her.

"Carrie tells me," said the elder aunt to the younger, a few days later, "that she'll stay with us another year. I told her I was very glad she was so sensible. She can save her money and have a comfortable home. At first, do you know, Sarah, I thought she was inclined to want a little more companionship. I was afraid she might get too lonely. I even thought of making her a little more one of the family; and then I thought, 'No, Frances Mowbray, don't begin anything like that. It only makes trouble in the long run.' Now you see she's quite contented and perfectly satisfied with her own place in life."

Jim coughed less and ate more, as the winter advanced. He certainly was better. But the doctor said to keep on with Scott's Emulsion through the spring.

## CHAPTER VII

### DEEP WATERS

CARRIE went to New York when they did, all leaving together on the early train, which meant a frosty stage-ride before sunrise. The long snowy top of Windward turned from gray to white, and from white to the pink of wild roses, as they drove along on wheels, over snow too drifted for runners. Sometimes the road had a scraped, sandy look, and sometimes folds of fine, dry snow ran across it, sifting in after them and obliterating the marks of the wheels. This wild-rose sunrise made Ellen tenderly homesick for a while,—a feeling she had had a good many times before, driving down to the station on early winter mornings.

In New York Carrie went to her married sister on San Juan Hill, and the aunts and children went to their usual boarding-house on a street near Madison Square. Fellow-boarders changed, individually, from year to year, but there were almost always some young journalists or magazine writers in hall or skylight bedrooms, a young lady or two studying art or music, and a dowager in the first floor front. Sometimes this oldish lady wore a scratch in front, and plumpers in her cheeks; sometimes she was æsthetic and rose late and wore watteau-backed tea-gowns: sometimes she desperately endeavored to wear out her too durable stuff dresses of a bygone fashion.



Ellen, in New York, always formed her impressions of people largely by their looks, and still more largely by their clothes. Perhaps she did so in the country, too, to a certain extent, and on first acquaintance. These fellow-boarders remained permanently in the stage of first acquaintances. They came into her world "like shadows, and so departed."

Her own clothes always seemed fearfully stodgy and countrified when she first arrived in New York, but she did not care very much until Aunt Fran would look at them and say so. Then she felt acutely their shortcomings. But it was really her way of wearing them that was at fault. It didn't matter much what Aunt Fran wore, she always looked stylish. Aunt Sallie, too, who was less stylish than Aunt Fran, had that same aristocratic way of looking as if she didn't care how she looked, which Jim and their father had.

Their father's winter visit this year had been delayed past Christmas, but now he came and stayed with them at the boarding-house for three weeks. Jim and Ellen always felt younger, more like children, when their father was there. He still used the old nursery words "high jinks" and "monkey-shines" about the times they had together. He was childishly fond himself of sweets and soda, and with him they owned to a childish love of them too. He was a famous companion, full of the gravest, most unegotistic humor. He took them, aunts and all, to Dockstader's Minstrels, and they all went too to the Natural History Museum, and saw (what Mr. Graham loved!) the curious leaf-insect, and walking-stick beetle, and the meteors, and petrified trees, and all such things. He hunted up a famous Russian picture, in a

saloon away down town, and they all went to see it with him.

That was the first time Ellen ever saw into rows of tenements, and smelled the garbage, which happened to be melting in a warm, unseasonable January sun, as it lay heaped in long frozen mountain ranges between the gutters. It was apparent that the streets where the well-to-do lived were cleaned much better than the streets where the poor lived. Curious how the poor seemed to get the rough end of everything, from taking their meals alone in pantries, to having garbage left under their windows! Little children, bow-legged, dirty, frowsled, struggled up and down over the garbage mountains, with soiled petticoats hanging out in untidy loops below soiled dresses and greasy coats. It was pleasant to escape from so many, and such dirty, children, into the orderly, quiet, comparatively refined saloon.

The big Russian picture was wonderful—a company feasting in twilight in a great barbarous hall. But they came back through that same sickly street to the Elevated. Mr. Graham, who loved pictures even better than he loved curious insects, was in a merry mood. He gave pennies to some of the dirty little children, and took others with him into a candy shop and bought barber-pole sticks for them, calling them “his Sunday school class,” which made them stare. He took off his hat with a flourish to old women with shawls over their heads; and on the Elevated train, in a voice just pitched high enough to agonize Jim and make him think the other passengers would hear, he announced, “Oranges, biscuits, ginger-beer, and lemonade!” This was an old joke of his. Jim did not seem to mind it as much as

usual. He smiled indolently at it. Perhaps he was outgrowing his very youthful father. Generally Ellen, who had inherited something of her father's simple-hearted youthfulness (without his humor) found this old joke funny, but today she was out of tune for it. She fastened her eyes, like leeches, on the wall of the car, above the people's heads and below the advertisements, thinking of those garbage mountains and those soiled, bow-legged children, and seeing into dark hall after dark hall, exhaling the sordid smell of poverty.

"That was the smell of dirt and cold potatoes," Aunt Fran would have said.

Their father's visit ended, within a day or two after this, with their all going out to dinner and to see the *School for Scandal* at the Lyceum Theater. He took away with him two wax cylinders to be put through the phonograph, into one of which Ellen, and the other Jim, had talked, and Ellen had sung in her thin fervent voice, "Jock of Hazeldean." As her father packed these precious cylinders away in his trunk, Ellen saw him arrange them alongside the little brown Prayer-Book he always carried East and West with him, and the card photograph of her mother, in that quaint Shetland shawl and bonnet with morning-glories.

A week after Mr. Graham had gone, Jim got up very languid one morning when the aunts were dressed for a shopping tour in Twenty-third Street. He dropped into a rocking-chair after breakfast and went to sleep. Aunt Fran, looking worried, told Ellen to try to keep him awake while she and Aunt Sallie went downstairs to find out from the landlady who was the best nearby doctor. Ellen couldn't keep Jim awake. He kept relapsing into

dozes. When the doctor came, he said Jim's temperature was one hundred and four. Jim waked up long enough to undress, and Aunt Fran put him into her own bed. Immediately he went to sleep again, but restlessly moved and coughed. By evening there was a nurse in the room. The strange doctor came again at nine and said, on being asked about sending for Mr. Graham, that he would better be telegraphed for at once. Aunt Sallie rushed out and sent the telegram, and in the morning received an answer:

"Leaving midnight. Wire me Buffalo boy's condition."

It still took thirty-eight hours to come from Minneapolis to new York.

Jim had pneumonia. He had "probably been running down for quite a while." He was "just in the condition," the doctor said. Jim dozed and dreamed and tossed about all night. The telegram sent to his father at Buffalo said, "No change." Mr. Graham, when he arrived in New York, had the telegram still unopened in his pocket. "If he was better I could wait, and if he was worse I couldn't," said Ellen's poor father, looking gray and cadaverous, with the soot of the journey deepening the sleepless circles round his eyes.

The nurse went up every afternoon to Ellen's small skylight room on the top floor, to rest. She was pretty tired by one o'clock. The aunts took care of Jim from one to four, and Ellen sat usually all that time in her father's room, where by two o'clock they began to watch out the window for the doctor. When he only came once a day, he came between two and four. Jim's fever came up in the afternoons. When the doctor had gone,

came the report of how high the fever had been that day. This was the event for which Mr. Graham spent the rest of the day consciously and systematically bracing himself. Ellen was too young and idle-willed to do so. She drifted from mercurially depressed to unreasonably hopeful moods, according to a hair-breadth's improvement or retrogression in the temperature. At this crucial hour, in the middle of the afternoon, when the doctor came, she always had a longing to shut the Venetian blinds and forget the unsympathizing sunshine which shone in from the southwest. On the contrary, it depressed her father to darken the room. She sat with him in dreary idleness, and watched the careless-looking people scattering through the square, or streaming along Twenty-third Street. She used to think sometimes, if Jim didn't get well, she would jump out that window, perhaps. Her father used to walk up and down the narrow hall-room, every now and then stopping beside his own bed, and saying, with an angry look:

"How can I lie here every night in comfort and know the boy is tossing and burning up with that infernal fever down there?"

When they saw the doctor come round the corner of the square, the tortured man used to think busily aloud.

"I won't expect a good report. I'll expect a poor one. Now how can we get some comfort ready, Ellen, for a poor report? Suppose his fever *has* risen a little? Suppose he *is* a shade weaker? Many a poor boy has been through the same thing, and yet made old bones. He has youth on his side. He has good steady nerves. Always led an outdoor life," etc., etc., unwearying, un-resting.

And when the examination of sputum was being made by the Board of Health, and there were twenty-four hours to be got through somehow before they could know whether, in case of Jim's recovery, his lungs would be "affected," Ellen helped her father plan how he could "get the boy away to Colorado, and live there with him two or three years, business or no business."

Fellow-boarders were kind and brought flowers, and lent gas stoves; the landlady was kind: the kind cook sat up half the night to send him broth. There was on the top floor where Jim and Ellen had had small skylight rooms, a wizened, dark, muttering chambermaid. She came one day to Aunt Fran's door and plucked her by the sleeve, asking how was the bye? and adding:

"They do be praying for him at St. Joseph's."

She came again the next day but one, and asked:

"How is the bye? I had Father Swift pray for him."

"God bless you!" said Aunt Fran, weeping.

"I'd like to look at him, mahm."

"Come in—he's asleep," whispered Aunt Fran, taking her in on tiptoe, where the three single women, mothers by adoption and grace, gazed at the sick boy. The old chambermaid gazed long and muttered something, and went out, having temporarily satisfied the beautiful, pitiful hunger of childless old hearts for the young.

The Barnhaven boys wrote anxious, daubed, ill-spelled letters to know about Jim. Mr. and Mrs. Willets, who were in New York buying goods for Willets and Barnhaven's, came to inquire. At home in Tory Hill Ellen had never especially liked Mrs. Willets, who in childhood days had so seldom "thought best" for

Jennie to come out and play: but now she freely kissed the kind, anxious, fat face, and held on gratefully to Mr. Willets's freckled hand.

Aunt Fran and Aunt Sallie never went out. They went down to meals, but hurried back, shrinking from the inquiries in the dining-room. Whether the nurse was present or not, they watched their son's illness with un-resting eyes.

One dreadful day Aunt Sallie took Ellen up to Jim's small room, beside Ellen's own, and together they silently emptied the bureau drawers, and brought down the terrible limp clothes in armfuls.

Never until that day had anyone disturbed the weary nurse in her short afternoon rest. But today to bear the hideous listlessness before the doctor came, even with her father's help, was beyond Ellen. All her impatient hopefulness was ebbing away. He had been sick two weeks and three days, and the fever had not turned. That very morning, when she had gone into the room in hat and coat to get the nurse's orders, he had broken her heart by saying feebly:

"Wish *I* was going out."

What good had that famous doctor, called in consultation last week, done? Only pound and pummel Jim's thin shell of a chest and shoulders and then go downstairs and talk to the other doctors, and say Jim had "a good deal of fight left in him yet," and kept "a stiff upper lip, and that was worth a whole lot," and perhaps if he were moved to Atlantic City or Lakewood——

And then the other doctor had said he was too weak to be moved: it would be madness.

Jim's mother had died of pneumonia.

Ellen woke up the nurse by her knock: and that matter-of-fact martyr, who was to die within her seven allotted years, pulled Ellen down on the edge of the bed and talked about Jim's recovery as if she knew he was going to get well better than she knew her own name. She kept on saying things, little things, about his getting well, being well, the first time he would go out, the time he would be well enough to go home, the good the mountain air would do him, the milk and cream and eggs and butter he'd eat and grow fat on, the long nights with open windows that would broaden his chest and build up his lungs. Over and over she repeated images of health and activity for Jim, until her iteration won upon Ellen's desperate mood and eased her foreboding.

All of a sudden, from who knew where? the garbage street of tenements came back into Ellen's mind, and impaled her relief like a butterfly on a pin.

"Do you know, Miss Carey, I went through such an awful street a week or two before Jim was taken sick!"

"Oh dear! yes, the town's full of them."

"They have cases of pneumonia there, I suppose, like everywhere else?"

"Yes,—but then, of course, they're taken to the hospital."

"That's a relief!" cried Ellen gladly.

"The worst of it is, of course, the hospitals can't keep them through their convalescence; but somehow most of them pull through, I guess," said Miss Carey cheerily.

"*They* don't get any change to mountain air, though," said Ellen in a brooding voice.

"No, I'm afraid they don't. Not many. Of course,



though, they've never seen the mountains. They don't know what they miss."

Ellen scarcely heard. With fixed eyes on the empty wall she was relentlessly dragging out of that wretched street those brothers of other people, who would not have country milk and cream.

"They won't have fresh butter and lots of eggs," she went on, thinking aloud.

"Poor child, don't worry about what you can't help. You can't take the whole world on your shoulders."

"If their lungs are affected, *they* can't go to Colorado and live there two or three years!"

Miss Carey said nothing; and Ellen, sitting on the floor in her old crumpled dress, relapsed into a staring reverie. She looked like a cataleptic, the nurse thought.

"Put it out of your mind, my dear child," said Miss Carey, her extreme weariness veiled by sincerest kindness.

"I don't want to put it out of my mind," said Ellen somberly. "What good is it to put horrible things out of your mind? There they are going on just the same. If people have to live in such a street, the least I can do is to think about it."

"Well, well, then, think if you must!"

"And I must talk to somebody! I can't talk to Father about it, or Aunt Fran, or Aunt Sallie, they're so worn out. I have to talk to you."

It was only dully that the young, brutal egotist in Ellen saw the tired humor in the nurse's patient, pretty face. But after all she was not quite selfish enough to take any more of the nurse's too brief resting time. Nor did she need to talk to anybody about it. The facts

were perfectly clear. She only needed to soak herself in thought about those bald, brutish inequalities between the sick poor and the sick rich. It is curious that she never tried to shelve the difficulty of reconciling herself to living in such an unreasonable world, by trying to think it *was* reasonable that poverty should be penalized, because poor people were so on account of laziness and shiftlessness. Or perhaps it did occur to her to answer herself in this way, and perhaps her head was temporarily satisfied or mystified; but something else in that case must have taken up the cudgels for those all-too-vividly imagined sick brothers of other sisters, who were to die of "affected" lungs, or undernourished convalescence in garbage streets, because their fathers were not industrious and efficient.

All those other young brothers like Jim were clamoring at her heart all the time she sat by her father's window waiting for the doctor's report. She was all their sisters; she saw them die in smelling rooms of the garbage street, and died with them, over and over. When the doctor went down the steps at five o'clock, one of those superstitious thoughts she was subject to went like a flashlight through her mind:

"God will let Jim get well if I will never forget those other boys, and I never will."

"He stayed a long time," her father muttered, watching the doctor get into his cab and drive away. Ellen started at the hollow, almost gasping, look of suspense his face wore. In violent reaction from the wretchedness she had felt when she and Aunt Sallie were bringing down those armfuls of mutely foreboding clothes, she was in a mood almost light-hearted. She took hold of her fa-

ther's hand and walked up and down with him, happily thinking some of her cheer, which was far too illogical to speak about, might flow from her fingers into his fingers, and into his heart.

Aunt Fran came up to the door and told them that the crisis seemed to have come; the doctor would come again at midnight and again at six in the morning.

At six in the morning, in the strange city dusk, they were all up and dressed, waiting for the doctor. But they already knew the temperature was down; and when the doctor came there was little more, really, that he could tell them, except to warn them that it might come up again; it was likely to fluctuate for a day or two. Ellen listened with respect, but in her sanguine heart she was confident that the temperature never would come up any more. In an instant of time she whisked Jim through his whole convalescence, fattened and bronzed him, and had him bat out the glorious championship game of the Seminary ball team next year. The shadowy loads of last autumn's anxiety, the sweating midnight hours, all rolled off her back. She went down to the table the moment the breakfast bell rang, and ate heartily, smiling at all the boarders and telling them Jim was a great deal better.

All the more like a thundercloud in her too bright sky was the sharp rise of Jim's fever that afternoon. It shot up again like a rocket. Yet the nurse smiled as she took out the thermometer; and Aunt Fran and Aunt Sallie nodded, resolutely throwing off their anxious looks, which had crept back, and saying:

"The doctor told us it would."

Mr. Graham was still cautiously hopeful, jealous of

his hope. Ellen gradually recovered her own dashed spirits, in an atmosphere where no one else was dashed. All that second night Jim's head rolled about weakly on the pillow; his complete exhaustion was amazing to behold. His wiry, sturdy constitution, however, weathered through: his heart ticked along feebly but steadily. In due time the temperature fell again. And this time it did not rise.

It was nineteen days he had been fighting the dim, desperate battle. But now the fellow-boarders began to make cheering jokes about him in the dining-room. They made Aunt Fran and Aunt Sallie almost laugh. Ellen laughed and cackled at all they said, in light-hearted glee. The old chambermaid came to the door and looked in again at the bye and went away crying and sobbing, and had thanks said in St. Joseph's. Aunt Sallie's young men called and brought calves-foot jelly. Carrie came and brought Jim a cravat that looked like a valentine, all embossed with lacy, papery gilt brocading. Jim had it put on over his night-shirt and smoothed it down with a very idiotic grin he knew (to Ellen's delight) how to make. He made Carrie laugh ruefully; but Ellen cackled loudly. She felt, in these days, as if she could drink up, at one gulp, the whole flood of February sunshine that engulfed the frozen Square.

She vowed to herself, with curses if she ever forgot the vow, that never again would she refuse to do anything, or go anywhere or to play any game, that Jim might propose. Never would she speak one cross word to him again, as long as she lived. When he threw his coat, lining downward, on the wet grass at ball games, she would brave everybody's jeers by going down where the

players sat, and turning it right side out. Her heart toward him, inside her big seventeen-year-old body, was inveterately childish.

Never would she forget either, those brothers in the garbage street. Out of her small allowance for clothes and pin-money it would not be much that she could do for them. But she could do this much; she could refuse to be resigned to a world that perpetuated such murderous inequality and unfraternity. She could be one person who wouldn't quote, "The poor you have always with you," as a text to offset that other text that nobody ever quoted, "Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor." Somewhere, sometime, there would be something more than this to do for them. Back came the Joan of Arc ideas, riding their snow-white chargers.

After æons came a day when Jim walked down one flight of stairs, with very weak knees doubling up like jack-knives on each step. Before that there had been days when he had sneezed: he had coughed a few times, and confessed that it hurt him, and Aunt Fran had flown off the handle and privately, to Aunt Sallie, had said that if the doctor couldn't prevent the poor child from having that pain, there were other doctors in New York. And once the glands of his neck had swelled, and Aunt Fran had flown off the handle again, and said it was all nonsense, this staying in the city another minute: she should just bundle the child up and take him back to Tory Hill and mountain air, and a good old country doctor. It was Aunt Sallie's cue to calm her down. She had to calm Ellen down, too, when the doctor, for the third time, put off the return to Tory Hill to "next week."

Meantime Mr. Graham said good-by to them all, and

went back, lonely and thankful, to "Investment Loans—Commercial Paper." And after cycles of waiting, they went home to Tory Hill; Jim and Aunt Fran driving to the station in a closed carriage, of which Aunt Fran had made the windows air-tight by tucking cotton-wool all round them. Ellen, Aunt Sallie, and Carrie went by the street cars, up Fourth Avenue to the Grand Central. They were laden as usual with bags, packages, umbrellas, and extra coats, and could hardly walk. When fellow-passengers tripped over these, Ellen giggled with irrepressible glee.

The Green Mountains were still brown with leafless maples where they were not black with evergreens. It was early April, and the expiring blasts of snow, hail, and whirlwind trailed dark gray veils across them, and hid the hollows in clouds for days at a time. Those winter sunrises of wild rose were past. One or two girls in school had found arbutus and hepaticas, and pinned them on their dresses. The streets melted into rivers and froze into glass and melted again. The spring was so backward that there was a second small run of sap. Jim began getting up to breakfast: and then one morning he walked up to Willets and Barnhaven's and got weighed. A few days after that he came up to school to see the fellows. It was a tough climb for his twig-like legs in their loose trousers: his knees were not very dependable yet. Aunt Fran had made him wear a newspaper under his coat, it was so windy on Seminary Hill. She had tried to make him wear her black woolen "sontag."

Julia Oldenbury seemed to have grown ever so much older and prettier in the fourteen weeks Ellen had been

away. Her beautiful red hair was darkening, and she wore it in becoming clusters round her ears and temples, different from everybody else. She had a whole barrelful of new poetry, while Ellen was bankrupt, and had to live on Julia's charity, accepting reams of verses, with nothing to give back but enthusiasm. It was largely Rossetti and Swinburne. There was something about this kind of poetry that made you feel thoroughly grown up; perhaps because you could see at a glance that it wasn't any kind of poetry that would appeal to children. Beautiful its mysterious melancholy, its intense sophistication, seemed. Its haunting, shadowy sinfulness was very appealing to minds freshly aware of being grown up. Moods of causeless melancholy came over Ellen sometimes, to her great satisfaction; especially as she got further and further away from the novelty and transport of Jim's recovery, and relapsed into normal life. With doses of "The House of Life" and "Laus Veneris" to encourage them, melancholy fits could be brought to quite a pitch, on gray days when the wind was not blowing. It was easy then to write verses utterly resigned to unmentioned (by implication unmentionable) sorrows and losses. It was not so easy when a fresh breeze was blowing.

## CHAPTER VIII

### GROWING WEATHER

TORY HILL was turning into a cottage summer place. The old Windward House, so white, sedate, and comely, behind its two great centenarian elms, was losing the pre-eminence which it had held for fifty years. There were livelier dances in the new clubhouse on the edge of the newly laid out eighteen-hole golf course. There were also tennis courts round the clubhouse, and so they called it the Country Club. Still the hops at the Windward House continued to be lively and pleasant, and its long pillared piazzas and shady lawns were well filled with rockers, smokers, and talkers. Prices, in fact, went up at the Windward House after the new street, Hemlock Terrace, was cut through the meadows above the golf course. Hemlock Terrace was all built up with renting cottages. From June to October it was brilliant with dresses and elaborate gardens and lawns; Tory Hill citizens of middle age were bowed over the lawns, trimming the edges with shears, or cutting out plantains from between the cracks of the sidewalks. The cottagers brought as much money into town as the Windward House.

Ellen went occasionally to the hotel hops and cottage teas and clubhouse dances. Her one evening dress of black net over washable white silk was well-worn, and



had often to be mended, in the flounce especially. But it was not her dress, so different from the toilets of most of the guests, that made her bashful and gauche at gatherings of young summer people. It was the light, feathery, top-of-the-wave sort of talk, starting nowhere, and ending in mid air. *She* couldn't talk unless she talked *about* something! These other people could. Anybody could begin, anywhere! They had jaunty bits of slang, always the *dernier cri*, which spiced and seasoned what they said. And then they were always in such frolicsome spirits! These girls who danced so much, halving all their dances, were heard always laughing over their shoulders, always merry and wide-awake and changeable and pleased with life. It was awfully hard to talk with them. And yet they were always so nice. Nobody could be pleasanter or more polite. They verbally pushed and pulled their partners toward Ellen every once in a while and secured a dance for her, as it were, by main force.

For one thing,—and Ellen was aware of it herself,—she was growing up slowly. She graduated from the Seminary in June of her nineteenth year; but that only seemed to leave her with the feeling that she had outgrown one shell, like a crab, and the new one hadn't hardened about her. Some people said it was the aunts' fault that Ellen Graham matured so slowly. She ought to have been sent to boarding-school. Others said it was a Scotch characteristic she had inherited from her father. Others again said she was too honest to be a social success. And none of them were right. Ellen knew herself what it was, better than any of them. It was just plain heavy-mindedness. She knew where she

would have been a thousand times more at home than in Tory Hill teas and clubhouse dances; and that was in the Methodist or Congregational ministry.

Or if such a thing existed as a social world composed of Julias, she would have fitted into it, she thought, successfully. She seemed to rest and expand whenever she went down the valley to see Julia. Julia's treatment of a person's ego was very gentle. All the talk that had been bottled up at the dances for fear of sounding serious and being shunted off by a bit of frolicsome slang, and interrupted by the blast of music for the next dance—all the notions so long hidden away from contemporaries that they fairly blinked in the unaccustomed light of day, came out and were aired and reinvigorated by seeing Julia. The relief of talking to her was so great that Ellen scarcely realized how sickish a strain of sentiment ran through their talk together; though Rossetti and Swinburne had begun to pall on her, and she had found Matthew Arnold's shorter poems on a book shelf where she had thought there was nothing but books of travel and French grammars. She couldn't interest Julia in these to the same extent as herself, though Julia would bend her beautiful red head over the Scholar-Gypsy. It wasn't the Scholar-Gypsy that Ellen loved particularly. It was the more moralizing poems, like the one frankly called "Morality," for instance; the ones that differed most from Rossetti and Swinburne; the ones that, so far from making a sweet sort of mystery about some vague sins or other, sweated and wrestled to get rid of them. They tasted of the fresh air, and made the "House of Life" seem stuffy.

Julia and Ellen sometimes talked about college to-

gether. Ellen was very anxious to go for one year's special study. She had kept Radcliffe in the back of her mind ever since she had read about it in "Style" a year and a half ago. It was simply a question of expense. Her father had it under consideration. There was a certain small fund her mother had left in a savings bank; it might be managed out of that perhaps. Every now and then, when one of the aunts casually referred to the possibility that she might not go to college, Ellen was startled to find how very much she wanted to go. It was always somewhere in her mind, lately. Even while she read the piteous literature of that forlorn cause she had embraced three years ago, she was thinking of college. College would harden the new shell for the shivering crab, perhaps!

As far as young men went, her experiences in these first two years of young ladyhood were of the most rudimentary sort. The more she thought about college, the less she thought about the young men she met at any of these summer doings in Tory Hill. Sometimes on the street, on their way to the Country Club, she met some personable young man in tweeds or pink coat, with a bag of clubs slung over his shoulder, who looked fresh, clean, and inviting. Meeting him later, however, at some golf tea, she would find that, to be quite truthful, he was as dull company to her as she seemed to be to him. The easefully fitting clothes of such young fellows, their comely tan, and fine athletic limbs, remained teasingly attractive. In fact she would gladly have pleased them if she could. Since she could not, it made for contentment in wall-flowerhood that they were so indubitably dull. Jim did not find them so. He played golf with them and brought

home yards of sporting news and talk about the matches and tournaments, quoting bright repartee from the lips of those very young men.

It is true that at those trying sorts of entertainment where people stood round, supposed to be busily talking, Ellen sometimes caught the eye of a bashful man, and shot out a glance of fellow-feeling to meet the glance of fellow-feeling which he shot out at her. Even so much as this would give her a sense of being companioned by one of the opposite sex. If things went further and they approached a piazza settle or deserted cosy-corner together, and found that they shared some liking, in literature or life—or better still, if they shared some hearty and unreasonable dislike!—they would talk happily with each other for an hour, or so much of the evening or afternoon as remained. Such a man was usually only spending Sunday in Tory Hill. He was apt also to be near, or in, his forties and to take a half fatherly tone. Sometimes she met someone, whether man or woman, who was congenially indignant over festering steel traps of fur-gatherers, or the still countenanced aigrette. Then indeed she would kindle, and people would stare and say:

“Who *has* that Graham girl got hold of? she’s really having a good time. For heaven’s sake don’t anybody disturb them! She’s got such a lot of color, I declare she really looks awfully pretty.”

Only once or twice in a whole season would she meet any man who seemed to like her, mysteriously, on her own account, irrespective of any congeniality of tastes. Such a person would regard her with a cockle-warming smile, and lead her on to talk a good deal about herself. She got so far as to feel a little bit of a flutter some-

times. These flutters, being rare, she took semi-seriously, and tried love poetry on them, once or twice, to see the effect. It was not very good. Poetry seemed high-flalutin in the dryish light of her experiences along this line. If any of the likes of these were even the beginnings of love affairs, then farewell to the poets. Aside from looking forward, confidently, if implicitly, to emotions that she could really connect with poetry, she was an objective lover, for the mere sake of their beauty, of certain impassioned lyrics about love. At the back of Mrs. Browning's poems was printed a translation from the German, which she found very satisfactory. It was one of the few love poems that might have been said by a woman. Its chief charm was in its disembodied warmth and fervor. It had nothing to do with

“—a coral lip  
Or a rosy cheek—”

—(was that the reason a woman's passion could be expressed by it?)—but it said that when the Judgment should call, and the souls rise up and “dance in airy swarms,” they two would

“stay still where the grave-shade falls,  
And I lie on in thine arms.”

There might have been a distinct idea that at college she might meet such a not impossible Him as she could feel this poem's fervor for.

In the midst of all this natural and wholesome young self-absorption, she did think of the garbage street, which had come to symbolize a great deal of social waste and brutality in her mind. At night particularly she woke and thought of it, dully wondering what she could do,

vowing to herself what she *would* do, some day, about it. On one such night she had been to hear a missionary preach about the Indians; and he had preached better, she thought, than any Bishop or clergyman she had ever heard before. He had asked everybody there to help him; but not with money. Let them do better than send money: let them "Agitate, agitate, and agitate!" the red man's wrongs. It was moving to hear him; but the application to her own case was made in the small wakeful hours afterward. She woke up, as it were, primed with it. It was on her lips: some dream, already forgotten, had left it there. "Agitate, agitate, and agitate!" She would agitate the garbage street. One of Aunt Fran's queer, interesting old gentleman friends had once said in Ellen's hearing that he was a "professional agitator." That was what she would be, then, a professional agitator. Here, among the summer people, the very people who needed to be prodded about such matters, she would speak up, bear witness for the poor people, who always seemed to get the rough edge of everything. It was considerably easier to think you would do it, when you were lying awake,—a good deal easier to think *then* that you would speak up, than it was actually to speak up when the time came and you were sitting on somebody's piazza, after dining with them, and all their talk was running on golf and bridge and violinists and actors;—to bolt headlong into the conversation then, with a somewhat impassioned reminiscence of the garbage street, was not so easy. The subject had to be lugged in by the ears, and held there by main force. "If I only had tact—if I knew how to lead up to things! If I could feel my way, and prepare the ground, and all that!"

thought Ellen despairingly. Her voice, too, would always tremble when talking about it, as it trembled when she talked about the experiments in wounding doves, and in grafting cancers on animals. "Practice makes perfect," she thought grimly.

The way in which her introduction of poor people and their rough edges into the conversation was received was generally a surprise to her. People agreed with her, as a rule, that there was a great deal of undeserved hardship among poor people generally. They always qualified, however, by saying that of course "those people" didn't feel hardship as "we" would. The assumption seemed to be that poor people were really made of different clay from the well-to-do. It was too bad, but of course they were "used to it." "I'll tell you, Miss Graham," said many worthy ladies, "I'll tell you whom I *do* pity. I don't pity the poor half as much as I do women of refinement whose incomes are cut off. They don't know what to do to earn money: they suffer everything before they'll ask for help. They can't stand roughing it."

"They're what we'd call inefficient and shiftless, I suppose, if they were working people," Ellen once answered.

Her hostess stared, and let the remark go unexplained.

Ellen tried very hard to fathom this seeming idea that there was some radical, even some physical difference, a difference of nature, between the poor and the well-to-do; but she only ended by deciding that it wasn't a real idea at all. It was nothing but a catch-word, a convenient form of letting one's self out of a discussion one wasn't very deeply interested in. With youth's easy arrogance

she decided that the well-to-do didn't care enough to think about it. They could make those few with whom they personally dealt comfortable and even sleek. About the others, she decided, they made a deliberate and successful effort to forget. And yet how *could* they? How could they possibly forget that this subject they dismissed from their minds was life and death to their fellow-citizens? How could they?—"Why just as I do!" cried Ellen to herself. "Most of the time *I* forget it. I only spasmodically talk about it to Mrs. Greenleaf and Mrs. Dana when I get a good opportunity: and then for a week I won't mention it. Half the time I'm afraid to mention it, just because I think it'll sound too viewy and pugnacious in me."

It was really the fact that none of the summer people ever took offense at her for talking about the rough edges poor people had, which led her first to conclude that they couldn't greatly care, one way or the other. For sometimes she would come home from dining at one of the cottages so excited with argument that she could not think, for hours, about going to sleep; and she would wonder if Mrs. Greenleaf would ever invite her to dinner again. And next day she would meet Mrs. Greenleaf at the post-office, and Mrs. Greenleaf would say:

"My dear, you were so interesting and original last night! You worked up the most interesting discussion I've heard for years."

Yes, that must be the explanation. Cold people, hungry people, men out in heavy rains without umbrella or overcoat, old women scrubbing floors, in stations or offices, that looked ready to drop, weren't real people at all to Mrs. Greenleaf and Mrs. Dana. They were only



subjects for interesting talk—unless they worked for Mrs. Greenleaf herself, and then they would be snugly, humanly cared for. The point simply was that Mrs. Greenleaf had no imagination—and yet she could spend March in Florence every year! Perhaps this was why!

Moods of such a sort as this were only occasional with Ellen, in those last school summers. She reverted from them to a healthy, if puzzled, absorption in her own affairs; to thoughts about college, love, poetry, and her own family. It was perhaps a sufficiently significant commentary on her thin ideas about poetry, that she never, in those years before she met Susan Redwood, made any connection whatever in her mind between her vague economic convictions and the verses she was always trying to write. Poetry she thought of as descriptive, beguiling, fairylike, or else resignedly moralizing upon one's individual case or the immutable facts of life in general;—never once did she think of it in those days as a militant cry to right injustice, or “bid the weak be strong.”

It was decided that her mother's savings bank account should be dipped into to pay her expenses for a year at Radcliffe. From hours upon hours of poring over the catalogue of studies, she had chosen three courses in English and one in Philosophy; and she went down to Cambridge in late September.

In that autumn of 1902 there were perhaps a few more twigs and branches on the Washington Elm than now. There were many pleasant windows in Fay House from which you could look out on the Elm, and the salmon-colored maples on the Common, and the rich blues in

the stained windows of Shepard Memorial Church. Old brown Fay House was still the heart of Radcliffe, as it had been in the old days when Radcliffe was Harvard Annex, or even before that, when it was the Society for the Collegiate Instruction of Women. The new gymnasium, with the glorious swimming-tank, was the pride of Freshmen. The theater was yet to be built; the swashbuckling Idler plays were still held in the Auditorium on the ground floor of Fay House; and there, too, were danced the hot, frolicsome Idler dances, with a bowl of café-frappé on a table in the ante-room for refreshment.

Sitting on the steps of the winding, white, crimson-carpeted staircase of Fay House, on the first day of college, Ellen was asked her name by many other freshmen and specials, and asked them theirs in turn. The new shell seemed cosy to the crab, already. She had a homelike feeling here. These colleagues on the stairs pointed out college celebrities to her as they passed through the halls. They told her something about the clubs, too; and some, who had elder sisters in upper classes, could tell her all sorts of interesting points about the playwrights most in favor in the Idler, and the actresses who took men's parts best, and the tennis champions. One or two girls were pointed out as having "got into" the Atlantic.

Ellen looked at all these, and especially the writers, with immense interest. They were quite ordinary-looking girls: except perhaps one, about whom there was something pervasively attractive, she thought. It was a short, rather thin young woman, with dark curling hair, every hair curling separately. She had clear, rea-

sonable, grayish-blue eyes. Ellen couldn't think what picture, or pictures, this girl reminded her of.

She saw her again from time to time in the halls, and at dances; and sometimes when they passed, Ellen would fasten her leech-like gaze quite shamelessly on this Susan Redwood, feeling a sort of slaking of some obscure thirst within herself while she gazed: at least, that was the nearest she could come to describing her sensation. Was it what college slang called a crush? If so it was a very modest one. Somewhere she had certainly seen photographs of pictures in foreign galleries that this girl always reminded her of. She teased herself by trying to place and ticket the resemblance. No other effort to come nearer she made.

And in fact it was only when she happened to see Miss Redwood that she wondered at all about her. For the rest of her time was all taken up with other sensations. Coming to Cambridge was for her like a miniature trip abroad; so much older, so much fuller of history and art were the environs here. One didn't think of local history in New York. It was coming to Boston that first made her realize that there was local history in New York. Or perhaps it was because she knew New York first, that coming to Boston seemed more like going to Europe, and less like going to the city.

What European travel can do as an anodyne, and why people consciously use it in that way, was dimly apparent to Ellen from her first walk in Cambridge. She went up to Mount Auburn Cemetery. Looking at the monuments of far-famed great writers there, she felt in a miniature Westminster Abbey. Conscience and inward strife of all sorts surrendered, temporarily, to the sense

of enchantment;—of having been brought through the air on a magic carpet, to halls of fame like this. The inscriptions about old Boston, the stones in Copps Hill, the belfry of old Christ Church affected her in the same way, with a sense of intoxication. It was not very deep, perhaps. If it were true, as physiologies in school had said, that we had three layers of skin, this only soaked through the outside one, perhaps. Certainly it was not a through and through feeling, like the blue sky. But it was a delicious sensation, nevertheless. There was an excitement in it, like what it must be to ride in these new “horseless carriages” people still came to their windows to watch. At the fair in Tory Hill in September there had been a horseless carriage, that took in passengers for fifteen cents a ride, round the fair grounds.

The statues and tablets, the old look of old squares and monuments in Boston, the Copley pictures in the Fine Arts Building, the quaint names on the street cars running out to the suburbs, all soaked through Ellen’s outer consciousness, and drugged it a little. The incredible fact that she was at college, was studying the art of writing under Harvard professors, drugged it yet more. Victorian feelings about art of all sorts, that it was something outside life, a special cult in some way restricted to a few to practice, and not for all even to expect to enjoy, hung about Ellen. To love beauty was natural to her, but she would not have thought it probable that it was natural to the average man or woman. Far less could she think the average man or woman endowed with any powers for creating beauty. Except of course moral beauty! Here one breathed a freer air. Here one could

be an American, a Christian. Unacknowledged, in deep eddies of her thinking lurked the conviction that life mattered, but art was fooling,—fooling which everybody took seriously, beautiful, enchanted fooling! She could not speak with bated breath of the destruction in war of monuments “graven with art and man’s device,” but the thought of one common soldier’s wounded body swarming with vermin, decaying with gangrene, made her, physically and morally, revolt with passion. Other people talked so seriously of art, however, it *must* be more important than she thought it. Here in Cambridge, or in Boston, it was easier to take their valuation of art than it had ever before seemed possible it could be. Almost, at times, she managed to take all people said about art quite seriously. Though it wasn’t morality it might be important. Old painters, great Italians, had painted for wicked Popes and blood-thirsty kings, to deck their licentious walls withal, most pure and beautiful Madonnas. Only it couldn’t, in the last analysis, be as important to paint Madonnas (if you *could* paint them for wicked and worldly Popes!) as it would have been to shout “Murderer! Beast!” at your patron, and then die in one of his dungeons.

## CHAPTER IX

### SUSAN

IN her large, low bedroom under the eaves, at her boarding-place on Audubon Street (up Massachusetts Avenue), Ellen used to think of all these, and other, matters, and plan beautiful fairylike descriptive verses and themes which she could never at all transfer from her fancy to her ten-cent writing tablets. There was a particular hour of the afternoon, especially, when the sun went down, very yellow, behind three dark pines far away in the region of Fresh Pond somewhere. It was a time to think romantic and ambitious thoughts about art. It was a time to plan a very beautiful novel, to be written some day, all one long purple patch. Every word in it should be a beautiful word, chosen like a jewel for a mosaic of jewels. Solitude in her boarding-house left these fancies free to expand unridiculed and unopposed. Her landlady was an elderly though an active lady, with an old dreamy husband, who pottered about curio shops in Boston all day long looking for Revolutionary and colonial fenders and andirons. They liked to talk about their grown-up, absent children, and Ellen capped their talk with endless reminiscences of her home and of her family. She talked at meals with gusto on these topics, but not of her ideas; and even read aloud some of her aunts', or Jim's, letters, saying gravely, "You know I

told you about our little terrier—do you know, my aunt says here that Larkum caught a baby chipmunk the other day.”

There was, however, an audience where she did talk of her ideas, sometimes. It was the corner of Room Q in Fay House, where she sat during most of her English courses; that big room upstairs which reminded her a little of the north schoolroom at the Seminary. There were three or four girls with red hair who sat in this corner habitually, in all the same English courses that Ellen had. There was enough cleverness in theme-writing among them and their colleagues at neighboring desks to warrant Mr. Barry, the Instructor in English Fifty, in christening it the Red-Haired Corner.

With these vivacious-minded neighbors she would often occupy the interval of Mr. Barry's frequent lateness by a lively confab on the art of writing, on realism, on preciousness, on the adjective, the three-decker Stevenson sentence, or the four running verbs of Mr. Kipling. Every one of the girls near her in room Q intended to be a writer. Some of them reviled the Faculty for not giving a course in playwriting this year, as it had been rumored last year they would do. Some were content with Mr. Barry and what he could teach them of the short story. All seemed to Ellen very clever, very sophisticated in their talk: but their writing usually was not much better than her own. Fantastic, delightful, absorbing conceptions, like her own, they had in plenty; but they would always evaporate, like frosty breath, from the point of the pen.

Everybody knew it was no fault of Mr. Barry's. Sometimes the Red-Haired Corner would spend its talk-

ing time, its choral prologue to the lecture, in panegyrics on Mr. Barry. Genius was certainly the name of that fair, nervous young instructor, with the pale eyes and prematurely gray mustache, hurrying in, always late, with pencil poised above the armful of books whence he culled passages to point his lucid lectures.

"You can imagine him in a monastery in the Middle Ages," one of the red-haired thought, "illuminating Thomas à Kempis."

"Or Omar Khayyam!"

"Or Montaigne."

"Or Peacock!"

"To me, do you know, he always seems like a sort of ghost—or no, more like a medium, raising the ghosts of words, making them come to life."

"Exactly! I know exactly what you mean. He lives in a world of words, not people. When we come to his lectures he takes us down underground into the world where words come alive."

Ellen said:

"He's like an ambassador from them to us."

"In conference, do you know," said another of the red-haired, "he always seems to me to have a kind of secret understanding with the English language. He pulls off all the folds and pads you wrap around your ideas to make 'em look pretty, and keep 'em warm,—I always feel as if my poor little themes were shivering with the cold when he hands them back to me."

They all went on for awhile, talking about Mr. Barry's ways with words, and how under his hand words seemed to marry and divorce, conspire and quarrel among themselves; how they developed all sorts of queer, illegitimate,



oblique, subsidiary meanings, undertones and overtones, like music, distances and thicknesses of air like painting. And from that they began to talk about color in letters, and to quote lines of poetry that seemed to them blue, or brown, or gray. The one with the reddest hair of all scoffed, and said the only reason

" Breaking the silence of the seas  
Among the farthest Hebrides "

sounded blue to Ellen, was because the sea was blue. The others exclaimed that Wordsworth had made the lines full of sibillants because sibillants were blue, and he was painting the sea. To test the question the reddest haired one (who was a sophomore, very blunt and sincere, for which Ellen liked her) proposed their taking some famous lines and voting by ballot, as to what colors they suggested. So they took:

" Myriads of rivulets hurrying through the lawns,  
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,  
And murmuring of innumerable bees."

Six of them cogitated, and wrote down the colors; Ellen promptly writing "brown." But some had said "silvery," and some "green," and one said "merely shadowy." The doubting sophomore jeered, and buried herself in "The Virginian" to wait for Mr. Barry.

When Mr. Barry called Ellen, in alphabetical turn, into conference, she found her returned themes labeled almost monotonously "Thin," "Diluted," "Pallid," "Homeopathic." He said there was something amiss with her. Evidently she was not letting herself go. "To use a very hackneyed expression greatly in vogue six or eight years ago," he said, "your themes aren't

‘inevitable’ enough. They want body, fervor, earth, sun. What’s the matter, Miss Graham?”

He was like a blindfolded person who gets very warm, but walks away, after all, from the thimble. Ellen only felt bewildered. He advised her to read Stevenson plentifully, and to lengthen and diversify her sentences; to try to cultivate a sense of humor; and not to be too brief. She did all this industriously, and got her next theme back marked “Watery,—unreal.”

Late in the autumn term the sophomore who had sneered at the notion of colors in the alphabet, and whom Ellen had come to like, in a dry sort of fashion, quite well, carried her off to the Auditorium to a meeting of the Radcliffe Woman Suffrage Club. Undoubtedly she had hopes of getting Ellen to join the club. It met in the late afternoon, and by ill-luck, there was a rainy bank of clouds blowing up over the Charles, and shortening the short November day; the early lights, too, blinked a little, as if disparaging the poor attendance. The attendance was very poor indeed. Scattered among the front seats were two or three dozen girls only. Ellen’s sophomore seemed worried, and cast sidelong glances at her as if to see whether she looked luke-warm.

“I’m ashamed of the college,” she said vehemently at last, as Ellen and she sat down together, well in front. “I hate to have Radcliffe tag along at the tail of the procession!”

“It’s the storm, don’t you think?”

“Storm—what’s a storm? Fair-weather suffragists!”

“The cause wouldn’t keep them from catching cold, though.”

"That's just where you're wrong, young woman. People that are really interested in what they're doing don't catch cold. Didn't you ever hear that old proverb, Bridegrooms and travelers are never ill?"

"It's nothing new to me, anyway," said Ellen. "I'm used to sparse meetings of things I'm intensely interested in. There's our village Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, that my dear little aunt founded years ago in a perfect frost of a meeting; and even yet, if ten people (including *none* of the honorary directors!) come out to the annual meeting in the Town Hall, we're astonished to see such a crowd. None of the ministers ever *think* of coming. They invariably all have engagements."

"Oh, well, then, you know what it is to try to get people out," said the sophomore, with a somewhat relieved air.

"Rather I do! I've been to anti-vivisection meetings in New York, too, in parlors, where there were a lot of empty chairs."

"Anti-vivisection meetings—what took you there, may I ask?"

"Why, I always go when I can."

"Don't tell me *you're* one of that God-forsaken crowd!"

"Look here, Miss Marvin! I used to think they were a God-forsaken crowd too, though my own aunt belonged to them; I used to take generalities about anæsthetics for granted, and all that; but when I found out what it really was, it turned my stomach pretty thoroughly, I can tell you."

"You don't mean to say you believe all that rot the

anti-v's circulate! Why, that's nothing but bad dreams in print," said the other with an air of amiable contempt.

"You may well call it rot!" cried Ellen. "It certainly looks rotten to anybody with a sense of justice, or a sense of decency, or anybody that's read their Bible, or believes in evolution! Torturing our poor relations just because it's cheap and safe—we'll never get rid of cancer or consumption that way, by infecting mice and dogs with them—low-lived filthy business!" shouted Ellen, making the other stare and laugh, as people turned and looked at them from far across the aisle.

"And if you don't believe our pamphlets, go over to the Boston Library and look up the references we give—I've been and looked up a lot of them myself——"

"Here, here! You might pitch your eloquence an octave or two lower, Miss Spitfire!"

"Well—you just go to a big library and look 'em up, will you, please?"

"I will, if you'll read Mary Wollstonecraft's 'Rights of Women.'"

"That's a bargain, then. You get nothing on me there! I've been wanting to read it a long time."

The dispute was amicably over when at length the chairman opened the meeting by calling for the minutes. While the routine was going on, Ellen asked herself why she was always having to change her mind about questions. Back at school the suffrage debate had had to be given up because nobody would take the suffrage side. And here she was convinced already that at least some women ought to vote; and she felt an upheaval in her mind about whether all women ought not. Changing

convictions was ticklish business. It gave one a kind of intellectual vertigo.

"I have the pleasure," the chairman was saying, "of introducing Miss Redwood, President of the English Club."

"Well!" said Ellen aloud.

"Didn't you know Sue Redwood was going to speak?"

"No. I've got beginner's luck, I guess."

"You sure have."

Miss Redwood threw her head back, tilted up her chin, and smiled in that instant, confident friendliness of hers. She had on a gray dress, and a little fall of lace from the open, rolling collar. She began by saying the ten-minute limit of speeches just permitted her——

"Take fifteen!" bawled a stout girl in the rear.

"Take twenty!" called Ellen's sophomore.

Miss Redwood bowed and laughed, but went on:

"—Just gives me time to tell you about my Great-aunt Jane's experience with the duck-pond."

"Cut along and tell us!" bawled the stout girl again.

"Great-aunt Jane is very fond of all kinds of poultry," said Miss Redwood in a very matter-of-fact tone. "She has very good success too, with it; but being very fat and old, she has to employ a man, or at least a boy, to manage for her. A year or two ago, she took, partly out of kindness, the son of an old acquaintance; a rather simple-minded boy he was, as you will see. The very first morning he was there, he began lugging great armfuls of lumber out of the barn, where the carpenter had left it after building the new bay-window. Great-aunt Jane stuck her head out the window and asked him

what in the world he was doing. He didn't make any answer at all at first, but after Aunt Jane had nearly screamed herself hoarse, he laid the boards down and came up to the sitting-room window and said:

" 'What say, ma'am? ' "

" 'I say what in the name of sense have you got all that lumber out there for? ' "

" 'Why, you haven't got no fence around the duck-pond! I'm going to build ye one as quick as I can.' "

" 'What for?' screamed Aunt Jane in a frenzy of impatience.

" 'Why, to keep the hens out of the water, of course! ' "

" 'Hens! Why, hens don't *go* in the water! ' "

" 'Just what I was a-telling ye! It hain't right for 'em to go in the water. That's why ye need a fence,' persisted the boy.

" 'But they *won't* go in the water! 'Tisn't hen nature to swim!' Aunt Jane was nearly apoplectic. She was wheezing and blowing like everything.

" 'Of course, 'tisn't hen nature to swim,' the boy explained patiently. 'That's why I'm buildin' the fence round the duck-pond. It wouldn't never do, as you say, to let those hens get into the water.' "

" 'Who ever *heard* of a hen trying to swim?' screamed Aunt Jane. She told me she felt as if she were going crazy.

" The boy just shook his head and agreed with her.

" 'As you say,' he said, 'it wouldn't never do. Who ever heard of such a thing? I'll hurry up and build the fence as quick as I can, ma'am.' "

" Aunt Jane just gave up. She saw that she had to. He *would* build the fence, and he did build it, and the

hens stopped scratching to watch him, and wonder why in the world——”

Miss Redwood paused, and tilted up her chin and smiled.

“—Why in the world,” she went on reasonably, “if he was really *sure* women couldn’t go into politics, because Nature and God had decided they shouldn’t, he thought it necessary to fence them out.”

There was a moment’s chuckle all over the room, and then a wave of exuberant applause, which made the two or three dozen sound like two or three hundred.

“Do you know Miss Redwood personally?” Ellen asked her friend the sophomore as they came away from the meeting.

“Yes, I know her more or less well.”

“What’s she like?”

“What’s she like, eh? Well—Sue Redwood’s the best girl to talk to that ever came down the pike.”

“Wish *I* knew her,” said Ellen.

“I wish you did, Freshie. I hope you may. She’s A 1, true blue, yard wide, all wool.”

Ellen was thinking of this characterization as she walked up Massachusetts Avenue toward Audubon Street in the rainy dusk. She was thinking how Julia had been for a long time the best person *she* knew to talk to, and wondering if she still was; or, if she had Julia down here in Cambridge, whether she would not seem a little sentimental. She hardly formulated this notion, but it was vaguely vivid. Julia’s tender beauty, and soft voice, and deprecating objections to the vote for women—how would they seem now, this afternoon, walking up from college after the suffrage meeting?

These half-clarified ideas were in her mind as she passed an old brown house a little way above the common. It had a narrow grass terrace and a great lilac bush in front. She only noticed it because, just as she was passing the front door, Susan Redwood came out and smiled and nodded and fell into step with her.

"Didn't I see you at the suffrage club?" Miss Redwood asked.

"Yes, I was there, and I clapped and pounded as loud as anybody. I tried to be the loudest," said Ellen.

"Are you a suffragist, yet?"

"I believe I am! I think you finished converting me."

"Well, if that's so, I'm the proud woman! Aunt Jane didn't suffer in vain."

"Have you really got an Aunt Jane, who has a duck-pond?"

"Why, of course I have. The only thing I invented was the persistency of the boy. As a matter of fact, Aunt Jane withered him up in a minute, half-witted though the poor fellow was."

"I supposed you made it all up!"

"Why, you see, I don't have to make things up—do you? Life furnishes plenty of pointed morals. Don't you think so?"

Ellen considered.

"Life didn't convert *me* to woman suffrage, though, with its pointed morals, Miss Redwood!"

"What did convert you, Miss——?"

"Graham. Ellen Graham. Why, 'Richard Feverel' began it, and your speech seemed to finish it."

"'Richard Feverel'!"

"Yes. First Mr. Barry recommended us all to read



it—English Fifty, you know. Well, I got it out of the library, and I felt as if a high wind were carrying me along, up-hill and down-hill, all through the book. And yet all the time there was something angry and protesting in my mind. It was Lucy! I couldn't stand Lucy. She was thrilling, she was wonderful, I was carried away with her; and yet all the time I knew she wasn't a real woman. She didn't have any thickness. She didn't have any sides. She only had two dimensions!"

Susan Redwood looked interested, waiting for more.

"She wasn't a daughter, or a sister, or a friend, or an inhabitant of a town, or a member of a church, or a neighbor, or anything else in the world but a sweetheart and a wife!" Ellen went on.

"Evidently, Miss Graham, you've read the book the way Meredith wanted it read."

"What did you say, Miss Redwood?"

"He must have had you in mind when he wrote it."

"Why—why, I thought he *loved* Lucy, himself! He described her as if she were his complete ideal."

"That's his art. You've never read any of his other novels?"

"No. But I can't get this through my head, quite! You say he didn't—you say Lucy wasn't——"

"Well, I'll tell you in one word. Meredith is a very strong suffragist, not to say feminist."

Ellen stood still, fairly floored by this.

"You didn't know George Meredith was a suffragist?"

"No! All I know about him is that he's an anti-vivisectionist."

"And I didn't know *that*!"

"Oh yes, most writers are a-v's. Practically all poets,

except Kipling." Ellen paused, embarrassed, and then blurted out, with that childishness so painful to herself, so quaintly pleasing to others, so utterly sincere:

"Miss Redwood! That loud talking in that argument before the suffrage meeting opened—that was me!"

Susan Redwood turned a warm, glowing face, and tilted her chin, and smiled. She took hold of both Ellen's hands and shook them and pressed them.

"Where do you live, Miss Graham? I'm coming up to see you some day."

This sudden warmth stiffened something in Ellen's back; her New-Englandishness, or Scotchness, or something compounded of the two, whispered to her:

"*She'll* never get up to see me."

She was sorry now that she had thought of Julia as sentimental; for here was this Miss Redwood acting as if she felt such a warmhearted interest in strangers—fresh specials—as everybody would know she *couldn't* feel. So why pretend? She said, awkwardly and rather stiffly:

"Nineteen Audubon Street."

And she added, still more awkwardly:

"I'll be very glad to see you,—if you *do* come."

"Of course I shall come! Well, I turn off here. Good-by, Miss Graham. It was just my luck to meet you this afternoon!"

She seized and pressed both Ellen's hands again. Her manner was Gallic in its warmth and ease and grace: and precisely because Ellen had never known before a Gallic personality, she stiffened New-Englandishly, and thought:

"That's all polite gush, shaking hands with both hands,

and looking so much in earnest, and so forth. I'll bet twenty cookies she *never* comes up to see me!"

But how charming, how inconceivably winsome, supposing it all *were* sincere, the kindling, cordial light in those gray-blue eyes, the sweet warmth of voice and manner! She found herself, eventually, piecing together all the impressions of their walk up the Avenue, and feeling again that singular sense of thirst being slaked, which she had had several times before. The final result of her thinking was an impression of someone emotionally warm, intellectually cool, against whose combined force and charm Scotch and New England blood together reared their stiff ramparts of distrust in vain.

## CHAPTER X

### 'A FAREWELL TO VERSE WRITING

AMONG those themes which Mr. Barry had been handing back so inexorably marked "Homeopathic," "Not significant," "Lacks substance," etc., had been one or two rash attempts at verses. One piece in particular, in which she had essayed a description of the Vermont autumn,—an attempt to put down that sensation autumn always gave her, of care-free enjoyment, almost Epicurean,—she had sent to the *Harvard Monthly*. It had, however, been returned. She went on trying to describe, in her themes, the charm she felt in various spots and times: in old Christ Church, on Garden Street, with its scroll text in blue and gold over the chancel; in those black pines over by Fresh Pond, after the sunset; or reading, in "Richard Feverel," the immortal scene beside the river;—even in being momentarily surrounded, as she was sometimes, in Harvard Square, by a bevy of athletes out running for an hour. She tried hard to put on paper the sensation these sudden engulfings gave her, of having entered for an instant into their clean joyous striving and achievement; the sense of comradeship these young men half lent her, and then withdrew. The main current of life itself, her strifes of thought and act, she never thought of as material for themes. She felt a beauty in them, it is true: a soiled but sterling beauty, with which art had no connection. Beauty in art was

something else, something static, clear, and separate from the mixed, roiled, noisy, weekday life where moral beauty, being hardier and stronger of stomach, could thrive and do well. And all the time she strove to describe the other sort of beauty in her themes, she knew in her heart that it was fooling, beautiful fooling at best; not immortally worth while.

But on the day after her walk up the Avenue with Susan Redwood, she found herself writing a theme different from any of the rest. It was a description of Webster Willets, and of his manner of escorting her home from Lyceum. She thought she could put in a little humor, and she did manage to make a line or two of the theme faintly humorous. But the fact was, she could not even yet look back on Webster Willets with complete equanimity. There was a certain wince in her desire for self-approbation whenever she thought of him. What had, in fact, obscurely worked on her to make her write about him, she did not then at all understand. That it was in any wise due to Susan Redwood did not occur to her. Some sub-conscious impulse made her drag Webster Willets out and air him in a theme. After she had handed it in, she thought of several other subjects along the same general line: subjects that would, she thought, produce the opposite of beauty if written about. They were basenesses, soiled spots—some very dark ones!—in her life. And yet she began to want to write about them; or at least, to drag them out and air them in talk with—somebody. She did not definitely think, with Susan Redwood.

This theme was not yet handed back when the holidays began.

It seemed to Ellen that she went back three or four years, if not six or eight, toward childhood again, coasting with Jim and her young fifty-nine-year-old father on every afternoon of the holidays. She had never felt so consciously young in her life as now, flying on bob-sleds down Seminary Hill between the tamaracks. And yet schooldays had never seemed so long ago and far away. Jim was still in the midst of school. He wanted to go to Princeton, though he had already made up his mind to be a doctor, and it was a question whether their father, out of his tenuous "Investment Loans" and "Commercial Paper" could finance even the four years of Medical School.

After all, it was great to see Julia again. All the Oldenburys came up for Christmas Day, and Julia too went coasting with Ellen and Jim and the Barnhavens, all Christmas evening. They stuck homemade pine torches into the ground on each side of the road, for the moon was not shining. Once Julia and Ellen sat out a few coasts, letting the others whirl by on the bob-sleds, in the weird flaring light of the torches, while they sat on spread-out overcoats on the creaking bridge over the frozen little stream that crossed the road at the foot of Seminary Hill. Julia was saying that she didn't care as much about poetry in these days as she once had; and Ellen recognized something and said a little impatiently:

"Julia! you've got that same old sentimental sag in your voice! Do cut it out!"

"You can call me sentimental all you like," said Julia. "If it's sentimental to feel that the greatest thing in life is to be an inspiration to somebody else—to somebody who—who——"

"Are you engaged, Julia Oldenbury?"

Julia jumped at Ellen's sharp tone, and denied, with soft violence, anything of *that* sort, adding:

"What's the matter with you, anyway, Ellen? You've got such a dry, cold kind of way of talking! If college does *that* to you, I believe I'm glad I didn't go."

Ellen tried to be sympathetic; but Julia kept going back to those sentimental tones and poses, which Ellen recognized as having been in vogue with both of them in Seminary days; and making veiled allusions to some affair of the heart, with perfectly evident relish in referring to it, and yet not referring to it openly. This was some other Julia than the one who loved poetry and who could talk about ideas. There was some man or other who had mortgaged her individuality; that was certain.

"Who is it, Julia? Talk right out, do!"

"Who is who? What do you——"

"Now don't go and ask me what I mean, like a *Ladies' Home Journal* heroine! There's some man in your mind—he's been there all this evening."

"Ellen, what *does* make you so crotchety?"

"Why, Julia, I'm not! I only—there. I won't talk about it. Yes, I will too! I'll say what I was going to. To be really in love I think, of course, is fine, finer than anything else except religion. But people in love that way would be frank and cheerful, I should think. If it was the real thing, they would. Now if you've got, for instance, into a sentimental, moonshining habit of thinking about somebody you *want to be in love with*, and are *trying to be in love with*——"

"Ellen, you take everything so seriously," said Julia,

in a half-scared sort of way, with one or two small laughs that were almost giggles. "*I* don't know what you're talking about. I really will be blessed if I do."

"Julia dear! let the half-gods go, and wait, if it's a thousand years, until the gods arrive!"

"What *makes* you think I have any half-gods?"

Ellen made no answer, but rose to join the other coasters. Her heart was very full: of self-reproach for already respecting, if not loving, Susan Redwood better than her old, dear Julia: of pity and shame for Julia if what she surmised were true: of tender and angry loyalty to Julia as against Susan. She *would* love Julia best; her older friend should always be her dearer. She would *not* love Susan best! not if Julia grew conscious and sentimental over twenty young men whom she did not love—not if she married twenty such men!

As they walked up the hill she thought she could fairly *hear* Julia smiling a sly, transparent smile, and see her swaying her slim shoulders in that spineless way of hers: or was it only the general flaring, swaying effect the torches gave?

Aunt Fran, on New Year's Day, heard a piece of news which she hastened, at tea, to tell Ellen.

"Your old beau, Ellen, is paying some attention to Julia, I hear."

"What, Aunt Fran? You don't mean Webster Willets!"

"So they say."

"Why, Aunt Fran, where did he see her? Oh! How *could* Julia—how *can* she? This is what it meant then, all that sentiment—I see perfectly! She's trying——"

Ellen broke off, unwilling to say aloud the shameful



thought she had, that Julia wanted so much to be in love, she was trying to be, even with a fellow like Webster.

Her aunt was saying:

"See her—why, he's been here half the fall, at the Willetses. He's at Middlebury, supposedly, at college; but he's been coming down here for Sundays more than half the time."

"I simply can't have it so, Aunt Fran!"

"Oh well, I guess it would be a very good arrangement. I understand, though, that the Oldenburys don't like it. Romeo and Celia, it seems, were horrified to find that he didn't know anything about the Punic Wars. Celia said he was 'woefully ignorant.' Romeo said he must have got into Middlebury on false pretenses; and somebody went and told him, and he got into an awful temper."

Ellen could hardly contain herself about this news, until she had written a letter to Julia about it, telling her how anxious she was that half-gods should not be mistaken for gods. She did not dare to say how much of a cave-man she thought Webster, for fear Julia had already managed to coax herself into an affection of sorts for him. She had to leave almost immediately after New Year's Day: the term opened at once. She had been back in Audubon Street two or three days when a letter came from Julia. It was very calm and forgiving and delicately, affectionately patronizing as of the woman selected toward the woman left. When Ellen came to know, etc., etc., things colleges did not teach, she would realize, etc., etc.

"Well, I've done all I could," said Ellen to herself, with that old superstitious feeling of hers, that every-

thing was safe if you only did your best. "Curious to think that I wanted so much, at school, years ago, to have somebody pay some attention to Julia; and now——!"

That same day she got back her theme, handed in just before Christmas, written about Webster. It was not labeled "Watery" or "Unreal" this time. Instead it bore the sacred word "Original."

"I envy you, Freshie," said her friend the sophomore, deciphering the red ink, upside down.

"Don't envy a poor creature like me!" cried Ellen. "This is the first time I've had a compliment from Mr. Barry."

"Well, I've never had one. Slams are all I get in conference and out. Nevertheless, I intend to learn to write. Mr. Barry's all to the good. I haven't a bit of fault to find with English Fifty. More power to his arm!"

"What worries me," confessed Ellen, "is my connected theme. Have you got yours planned out?"

"Oh yes—after a fashion. Novelette, of course. Is yours going to be a novelette?"

"Heavens and earth, I don't know! I *can't* write fiction! I used to try, for our school paper. I can begin all right, and I don't mind conversation: but about the middle I get stuck. I can't engineer that 'dynamic change' that Mr. Barry talks about. The characters all balk, and sulk, and sit down in the middle of the plot, and *won't* go on!"

The wild idea of attempting a sonnet sequence had crossed her mind. But she could vividly see and hear Mr. Barry's vials of sarcasm poured out on it. She thought,

too, of a series of articles on woman suffrage, in which, of late, she was becoming very much interested. But she was too little informed to manage six fortnightly themes, even of minimum length. One would have exhausted her knowledge, to say nothing of her thought.

On the spur of the moment, as she walked homeward up North Avenue, she turned and went up to the old brown house of the Redwoods and rang the doorbell. Could she see Miss Redwood a moment? Miss Redwood heard her name, and ran downstairs and brought her into a long, plain, homey living-room, which had an old-fashioned stove in the middle, with mica windows all aglow.

"Of course I've got time. I like to be interrupted. Take off your coat! No? Let's sit down here on the sofa, then, away from that barbarously hot stove."

"I just came on the chance, Miss Redwood, that you'd have time, and be in the mood, to advise me about my connected theme."

"*How* did you know my special weakness for giving advice, Miss Graham? Connected theme, you say? in English Fifty?"

"Anybody would know that eager tone of voice couldn't possibly be sincere, so why put it on?" thought Ellen, stiffening momentarily, though in vain, against the bright charm of her companion. Nevertheless she went on and told her perplexities in full, ending:

"Would you try a piece of argumentative writing—character sketches—or what? Or would you cross the Rubicon and try the sonnet sequence?"

"Miss Graham, see here!—Why don't we go and see father about it?"

"Professor Redwood—oh, I don't think——"

"The more I consider it, the better plan I think it would be. Let's see—is father in? Wait till I run along to his study and see.—Unluckily, he's out. But look here, Miss Graham—couldn't you come round this evening at about eight? I know he'll be in then, for I write all his notes of acceptance, and make his lecture engagements.—Why, no, of course he couldn't see *everybody* from Radcliffe whenever they happened to drop in: but for somebody who wants to write verses, and *doesn't* want to write fiction,—for such an unusual person as that, he'd break an engagement to be home."

Ellen stood irresolute, ashamed to tell the truth, and say she really didn't want to beard the old professor. At length she said:

"Why, I'm ever so much obliged, Miss Redwood. If you're sure your father will really have the time to spare."

"Good enough! Bring some of your poems, too, Miss Graham. Oh yes, you must!" She laid a small, warmly clasping hand on Ellen's arm. "Of course he'll want to see them. I'm coming up to see you, too. Are you at home late in the afternoons?"

All the rest of the way home, Ellen reflected on the smallness of Susan Redwood's physique, and her singular powers of persuasion.

"You do whatever she wants you to, and yet she doesn't make you," was her final epitome of the matter.

Six was the number of the pieces of her verse she at length sifted out of her bundle, trusting to instinct which to submit to Professor Redwood. She dressed in her new dark green woolen house dress, with wide em-

broidered collar, scarlet tie, and black velvet girdle. She took some satisfaction looking in the glass at her sleek satin braids, and the clear bright color which came up, at excited moments like this, to such a glowing pitch that it made amends, temporarily, for her pale sandy eye-lashes, and the slight retreat of her chin. Her chin looked to be backing gingerly away from her small upward-tilted nose. Her eyes were not very deep under her brow, and seemed, at unbecoming moments, practically flush with her face. But a complexion as fine as hers could, in its prime, make up for worse defects of feature than any she had.

"I look comparatively pretty," she said to herself, with satisfaction, tucking the manuscript under her arm.

Professor Redwood was at home. Certainly he would see Miss Graham from Radcliffe. Miss Susan had said——

Miss Susan came out of the sitting-room, leaving the door ajar, and making variegated voices audible, and the bright mica windows of the old stove visible again, with the two or three plain old engravings, brownly stained, of the grass-grown Forum and Colosseum and Pantheon of 1860 Rome, which hung above the sofa where she had sat with Ellen in the afternoon. Now she took hold of Ellen's hand, child-fashion, and drew her down the hall, beyond the stairs and hanging lamp, to a door where she gave a nominal knock and instantly walked in, still holding Ellen by the hand.

"Here she is, father dear," she said. "Did you bring a lot of your verses, Miss Graham? I'm not going to take myself off until I see you both comfortably settled to talk. There, that's the very chair, Miss Graham—I al-

ways sit there, by the fireplace." In relinquishing Ellen's hand she gave it a warm little friendly squeeze, and was off.

"Good-evening, Miss Gray."

"Good-evening, Professor Redwood."

"Mister'll do. Well, Miss Gray, you're a poet, my daughter tells me. She gave me quite a preface to you at tea tonight. Let's see your poems the very first thing. Did you bring them all?"

"N-no, I only brought six. I tried to p-pick out the best of them. I haven't written a great many——"

"Oh! Let's see the six, then; but six is very few."

"I don't know whether you can read my writing, Professor—Mr. Redwood."

"I can read anybody's writing, Miss Green. I can read yours upside down. What's this on? Oh, Mountain Autumn. Mmmmmmmmmzzzzzzzz, oh yes. Let's talk this over a little, Miss Gray. You've got larks in it. Did you ever see a lark, Miss Green?"

"I—don't——"

"You don't know? You probably don't have nature study in your schools yet. I don't know larks when I see 'em, either, Miss Gray; but I suspect,—I suspect a lark's not an American bird."

"Well—I could change that——"

"It's quite melodious, and you aren't afraid of exacting meters, though you ought to be. However, don't be afraid of any meter alive. You'll spoil the immediate verses you're trying to write, Miss Green, every time you tackle a different meter; but never mind that. Whenever you find an immortal poem, or even an ephemeral one, an un-idea'd one, that has a lovely sound, 'play the

sedulous ape,' Miss Gray, 'play the sedulous ape.' That's how Stevenson says he learned to write, you know. Here, let's see another. Mmmmmmmmmmm. I should leave out that middle stanza. I should leave off the last one too. Rough versification—rough! It burrs my tongue; but—mmmmmmmmmm—that wouldn't so much matter, Miss Gray—Miss Green, *if* it had an idea worth writing about. But now, what *is* the idea? Or is there any? Is it a first-hand thought, or is it a second-hand thought? Mmmmm—the general idea seems to be—seems to be——”

“Despair,” put in Ellen, with smothered indignation, and not quite smothered pain.

The professor glanced up at her quickly. His fine, aggressive bull head and rapid-fire eyes co-existed with a warmer than normal heart. Ellen looked pretty, too, her wholesome face suffused with bright color: and the gas shone beautifully on her Dutch braids of taffy-colored hair.

“You've only done in this poem, Miss Gray, what all young poets do; tried to describe a state you don't know—presumably—much about. Well—will you let the old bear see the rest of your verses? To be your age again, Miss Green—Miss Gray, I'd gladly write young poems on despair.”

Ellen surrendered all four of her remaining poems. He read them all, swiftly and quite silently this time. Then he methodically rearranged all six, and handed them back to her, at the same time hitching his chair forward, nearer to her, in a manner that somehow reminded her of a doctor at a bedside.

“Now, Miss Green, if you'll look at them in turn,

you'll see what I think the order of merit. A descriptive, melodious, cheerful piece comes first. A cheerful, melodious, descriptive piece comes second. A melodious, cheerful, and descriptive piece comes third. The convalescent child picking the berries I placed fourth: and after that, neck and neck, come the lovers' parting and the lyric of despair."

Ellen succeeded in smiling, and endeavored to laugh, but produced a sound which drew the professor's sudden and penetrating glance again.

"I see that you love poetry, Miss Green. You love, you understand, you could teach others to love and understand it. You have read with advantage a good deal of modern, and a respectable modicum of old, or at least Elizabethan, poetry. The lyric on the convalescent child is written in the same meter as Marvell's great poem on Cromwell's return from the wars. You know that poem?"

"Oh, I know it, and I love, I love it!" cried Ellen.

"Teach others to know and love it, Miss Green! Fit yourself to do so; it is a great work. Your excellent, your dignified, your aristocratic place in the world of poetry, Miss Green, is to teach and criticise it; not, yourself, Miss Green,—not—not to write poetry. There's more in you than poetry is able to bring out. It doesn't dig deep into you. It's on the shallower levels of your life that you write it. But teach the next generation after you to have a delicate ear like yours, an Æolian heart for the greatest of the arts to play upon. And that's not all, though that's enough for anybody. In your lifetime a new poet will possibly, very probably, arise; come out



and welcome him, understand him, circulate him, Miss Gray; be John the Baptist to him."

Ellen took up her gloves and crushed the manuscripts into her pocket. If she gave them a little dig, a little shove and crunch as she did so, the surgeon resting after the operation beside his table did not see it. His hawk-gray eyes were misted over with backward thoughts. He sat, frankly obese and elderly, leaning back in his desk-chair, staring at his own young years. His trousers strained over his plump knees. He was a largely-framed, lion-chested man, an athlete still, despite his fat: a swimmer famed at his Nantucket summer home.

"Oh! Good-night, Miss Green," he started back to life to say, as she approached the table. "You must remember I'm not an infallible critic, after all. And then I suspect you of not knowing which were your best verses, and leaving better ones at home than these. Oh, well! I've passed along advice to you, Miss Green, which was given to me a good many years ago by another old codger like myself, at Dartmouth College: and which I—which I—took."

"Oh! oh!" cried Ellen, touched to the quick, and startled out of her young self-absorption. "I think, I'm sure! you oughtn't to have taken that person's advice. Oh, I'm sorry you took it!"

"Why, Miss Green?"

"Because—— Well, because——"

"Because you're sorry for me, bless your heart. You think my feelings were hurt. In which you're perfectly right, my dear child; perfectly correct. They were very badly wounded. But they recovered a long, long time ago. Come here a minute, Miss Gray. I've looked at

your verses: now let me look at you. Folks are better than books. Turn round; let me get the light on your face. There! well, you look to me like a good child, even if you haven't elected any of my courses. Whatever you write, Miss Gray, don't demean the great arts of language by using words at all unless you have something to say. And if you have something to say, don't look at the gallery out of the tail of your eye and then say something else. Good-night, good-night." He rose, and made rather a quaint bow. "Good-night, my child. Be a good girl."

A thin and small hand, sliding into Ellen's just outside the study door, first wedged into her trance the knowledge that Susan Redwood was alongside her in the hail, and then awoke her to the fact that Susan was coming out with her, was on the narrow porch, was coming down the steps with her. Susan was asking something about the connected theme, and whether she had got any good ideas for it.

"Connected theme?" asked Ellen blankly.

"Yes—didn't father make any suggestion about it? He's generally very good to talk to."

"Why, Miss Redwood, I forgot to ask him about the connected theme. You see, I didn't think of it. You see—you see we were talking about my verses." She swallowed once or twice.

"I think I'll see you home, Miss Graham. I mean Ellen."

"Oh! Miss Redwood, I'd like to tell you—— It's awfully good of you to walk along with me. But look here! your feet! in those moccasins, this cold evening! And no coat!"

"I've got a scarf. And anyway I don't feel anything but a pleasant invigorating tingle in the air."

"I oughtn't to feel anything but an invigorating tingle in what your father said to me, I suppose! But you see, he said I'd better not write verses any more. He thinks really I'm not fitted for it. I think I'll take his advice. I don't think I'll probably ever write any more verses."

Susan Redwood said nothing, but continued to walk along beside her all along North Avenue, and Audubon Street; and when Ellen had let herself into her boarding-house, and said good-night, and gone upstairs to her eave room, she suddenly realized that she had been calling Miss Redwood Sue and that Sue had several times called her Ellen.

She found her room cold, and the gas sputtered and flared as if water had leaked into the main. She drew a chair up under the gas jet and laid her bundle of manuscript on it, untying the string. Taking them one by one, she held each of her verses in the gas flame until the sheet was entirely consumed, except the corner her thumb and finger held. She burned the poorest and oldest of them first, and then the middling ones, so many of which had been in the *Seminary Mirror*. Then she came to the best. It was a little hard to burn up "Arbutus," "Indian Lane," and "The Last Mile Homeward": but it was not at all hard to burn the six pieces she had had with her that evening.

## CHAPTER XI

### CALLERS IN AUDUBON STREET

IN the course of February, Ellen did think of a plot for her connected theme. She put the Oldenburys into it; laid it, in fact, at the delightful, impoverished old farm itself. It was very pleasant to arrange and rearrange the plans for the six chapters, and dwell in imagination on the intimate and fascinating descriptions she felt competent to give of the Oldenbury family and the valley life in general. To be sure, when she thought of the place and people, she always saw them in still life. Often, too, as she walked along Mount Auburn Street, or round by Fresh Pond, thinking out the details, they arranged themselves in a set of versified pictures. She thought these sneakings back toward verse-writing insignificant, and indulged them accordingly. When she had lazily allowed herself to complete the first of these versified vignettes, which began:

“By Silver Water’s westering turn,  
Beneath the rocks of Windward Steep,  
All lulled and lost in brier and fern,  
A fabled village lies asleep,”

she bethought herself that it would be rather interesting to send it to the *Harvard Monthly*. When the next *Monthly* came out, there was her name on the brown cover:

Atlantis Town . . . . . Ellen M. Graham.

It was said that the Faculty themselves occasionally perused the *Monthly*. A picture presented itself to Ellen, of Professor Redwood rubbing his glasses and laying the *Monthly*, face open, down on his desk at the page that his daughter had marked for him to read, while he drew a sheet of paper toward him and wrote her a note bidding her not to take his advice too seriously; after all, it might be that, etc., these verses were so much better than any she had showed him. No such note came. She might have spared herself the trouble of fancying what she would write back, to the effect that she had thought his first advice over, had decided it to be sound, and accepted it. The frantic dreams of ardent youth sometimes fly nearer the mark than the modest sobrieties of middle age. Susan said long afterward that when she showed her father "Atlantis Town" he read it aloud at the breakfast table, and said with a great chuckle:

"The idea of that impertinent young friend of yours, Sue, going on writing verses! If I *could* suppose that any advice of mine was ever mistaken—for certainly there's a little thin feeling, a kind of pale imitation of poetry in this;—but no! Better have a good English teacher out of her, in some good stogey girls' school, than a poor skim-milk poetaster, who gets into the *Atlantic* once in fifteen years, and lives on that instead of a good nourishing salary."

Meanwhile the first chapter of the connected theme about the Oldenburys did score a modest sort of success. The beloved unworldly cousins were laid on with affectionate touches, and above all Julia—the Julia of long ago quite lived on the foolscap pages. Mr. Barry and

his assistant both ungrudgingly confessed that they saw and heard Julia; saw her white stockings and quaint child-dresses, saw her curtsy, heard her faintly sing, to her big brother's fiddle, "My Grandma lives on yunder little green," and "Where are you going, my pretty maid?" She had described the heavy Milton propped open on the drying milkpans at the side doorstep, while the big sisters hulled field strawberries, and one read "Paradise Lost" aloud; and how the big brothers sang "Hark, hark, the lark" as they plowed and harrowed. She told, too, how absent-minded they were, and how they would lay down their pitchforks in the haying-field when a thunder shower was blowing up, to discuss the President's message. It was quite vivid and very pretty.

But in the second installment the continued description began to pall, and she felt herself that she *must* make something happen. But what? Nothing *would* happen; nothing, that is, like what usually happened in stories. Such things as had happened to her, such things as she knew vividly about, weren't the kind of things that happened in stories. She did not even think of her own life, as material, to reject it; did not think of it as material at all. She tried to make one of the Oldenburys fall in love, but could not maneuver a single member of that all-bachelor family into a love affair that her imagination would so much as nibble at. And all the time verses kept coming into her mind and had to be driven out again. It would be so easy to write a lot of verses—portraits of the Oldenburys. Mr. Barry returned the second chapter with the bald query, "Where's your plot?" A love affair for poor Cousin Celia Oldenbury

was dragged into the third chapter, struggling and kicking, by the scruff of the neck. Cousin Celia was worried by a stick-like wooer through several pages. The third chapter came back with the comment, "Your lovers talk with wooden teeth."

Three fortnightly chapters since the end of February had brought her to the middle of April. At about that time came on some sickish-sweet weather, with sudden hot sunshine, and clouds of winter-old dust blowing into one's nostrils and throat along North Avenue. This faintish weather came on just as she was getting thoroughly discouraged about her plot. She believed she was a little bilious, anyway. This old dark-blue street skirt she had worn all winter was getting rather shabby, and she felt a spring longing for a new white lawn waist or two. She believed she would go in to Jordan Marsh's tomorrow. She had a little left of her father's last quarterly check, in the Charles River Bank. Perhaps it would be just as well to take a little nux vomica, iron, and quinine for a week or two. Aunt Sallie's Wednesday letter hadn't come. Perhaps it would be in the letter-box perched like a bird-house outside the door of the house in Audubon Street. The Easter vacation had been so short—three days—she hadn't gone home. It had been rather a rainy and a homesick time.

No, there was no Wednesday letter from Aunt Sallie in the bird-house box. Out of sight, out of mind in Tory Hill, evidently! And then as she opened the door, a scent of lilacs met her, and led her, softly strengthening, up the first, up the second flight of stairs; led her straight to her eave room, and there sat Susan Redwood, in the slanting sunbeams from the dormer window, with a

pitcher of lilacs, mixed purple and white, on the table in front of her.

The fact was that there had been something dream-like in the whole journey upstairs, led by the lilac smell. Mrs. Ray, Ellen's landlady, was that sort of housekeeper who keeps dark-green shades drawn down to the sill, from the beginning of spring through Indian summer: whom the fear of flies prevents from calling their souls their own. Some people think dim halls and houses gloomy, but Ellen loved a dusky light indoors; it seemed Vermontish and summer-like, like the dark blue-green gloom of maple shade. Today especially, when the April sun was so hot, and so unmitigated by leafage, it was delightful to find the hall so dark, so cool, and smelling so mysteriously of lilacs. Lilacs were the only perennial flower that bloomed at Wakerobin. Next to hepaticas, found in the woods out beyond the Seminary on spring Sundays, Ellen delighted in lilacs.

"Bother it all, why didn't I take the car and get home sooner?" she cried.

"Not at all, my dear Ellen! I've only been here a few minutes. I've been sitting with my eyes glued to those pine trees over by Fresh Pond. What a view you have! Who'd have thought Audubon Street was up so high?"

Ellen gave Susan the rocker and took the straight-backed chair herself, leaning over and burying her nose in the lilacs, half smothering her thanks for them.

"You don't mind the smell—t isn't too strong for your bedroom?"

"I should say not—I'd like to stuff my pillow with lilacs. I've got a special hanker for them: the smell of them would do for dessert any day."



"But to think it's lilac time—the middle of April—before I've got up here to see you! I was away twice in March,—I was a little tired with the settlement classes, and the exchange lessons in English and Italian; and father prescribed a wineglass full of Vermont air for me."

"Vermont!"

"Why, yes. Don't tell me you're from Vermont, Ellen?"

"Bennington County——"

"Bennington *County*! Anywhere near Tewkesbury?"

"The next thing to it—Tory Hill."

"What—the Old Street or the New Street?"

"The Old."

"Well! I—will—be—blessed!"

"I thought your father came here from Indiana?"

"So he did: but he went to Indiana from Vermont."

"And you've actually been in the Old Street?"

"My goodness, yes. Why, my great-aunt lives in the Evergreen House, in the middle of Tewkesbury."

"Your Great-aunt Jane?"

"My Great-aunt Jane."

"That had the duck-pond?"

"The surest thing you know."

"The Evergreen House—why, that's the old Oldenbury homestead."

Susan nodded.

"Grandfather married an Oldenbury."

"Why, then you know Julia?"

"Of course I do—or did, when I was a little girl."

“ And Cousin Celia and Cousin Miranda and Cousin Romeo and Cousin Augustus? ”

“ Every Shakespearean one of them. ”

“ Why—they never told me about your being here! ”

“ Do you know why? I guess they never knew it. It’s that silly old boundary feud. Our branch of the family had some lumber land, that ran up Cock Hollow to where it joins the Stratton Glen, and of course the Tory Hill Oldenburys owned all the other side of Cock Hollow; and years and years ago, in Great-grandfather’s time, there was a dispute about a rod or two of land, and neither side ever gave up. About once in so often a Tewkesbury Oldenbury makes a legal snatch for it, and then there are years of coolness between the families; and after they’ve been friendly for a while, a Tory Hill Oldenbury makes a legal snatch, and the coolness comes back again. ”

They both laughed indulgently over the absurdities of their elders.

“ Why, we ought to be old friends! ”

“ We’re practically relations! ”

“ I believe I *have* heard of that old law suit,” said Ellen.

“ Heard of it,—why, if you stayed at Evergreen House, my dear Ellen, you’d hear of nothing else. ”

“ But to think of your having been in the Old Street, Sue! ”

“ And to think of your living right in front of Windward Mountain! ”

“ And our both knowing Julia! ”

From this they got into a discussion of Julia, and what she had grown up like, and what a great friend she was of Ellen’s. An instinct of protection made Ellen

forbear to speak of having seen Julia in the Christmas holidays, or of her suspicions in regard to Julia and Webster Willets. She told Sue how Julia was all the time growing prettier and her dark-red hair more and more plentiful and waving, and her complexion lily-whiter. Sue was more interested to know what "Julia herself" was like, and what she cared about chiefly in the world, and what she intended to do. Ellen seemed to look out across all the gulfs of difference between standards, as she answered:

"Why, I don't know what Julia *does* intend to do, unless to teach school, for a few years."

"Why only a few years?"

"Oh, I don't know—well, I suppose——"

"She'll get married, you were going to say. But what then? Wouldn't she keep on doing something, even if she did marry?"

"Well, she'd probably have children to take care of. Wouldn't that be enough?" Ellen almost added, "for Julia."

"It might be, for four or five years,—maybe seven or eight years, while they were little, if she did everything for them herself. But unless Julia dies very young indeed, there'll be a good many years when the children are in school, and a good many after they're grown up."

Ellen considered, but exert her imagination as she might, she could not see Julia bestirring herself in the church, the Grange, or the Village Improvement Society.

"Julia'll just read poetry," she said, "and maybe write some, herself, when the house is in order, and the children are in school."

"Out of what?"

"Er—what did you say?"

"What material will Julia Oldenbury have to make poetry out of, if all she does in life is to write poetry?" repeated Sue Redwood in her sweet voice, tilting up her chin and smiling with delightful reasonableness.

"She can write out of motherhood, I suppose," said Ellen solemnly.

Sue shook her head.

"Modern motherhood isn't exacting enough, taken by itself, to furnish much poetry," she said. "You've heard that old saying, 'If you don't know anything but the Bible, you don't know the Bible'?"

A flash of that same feeling she had had before, with Sue, of quenching a subconscious thirst, came over Ellen.

"Give me a minute—let me think over this a minute or two," she said. "You see, I've never thought much about material for poetry—in either Julia's or my own case."

"In your own case, Ellen? Don't tell me with that candid face of yours you ever expected to shut yourself up and spin poetry out of nothing!"

"Well—I wouldn't quite want to shut myself up; though I always looked upon writing as something people *did* shut themselves up for. But I like to belong to things. I like belonging to the Monday Club and the Village Improvement, and I've been thinking lately I'd join whatever woman suffrage organization they have in Vermont. But I've always thought it would interfere with writing, going into things—distracting your mind——"

"You were going into them in spite of wanting to be a poet, then?"

"Why, yes. To tell you the honest truth, Sue, I never *could* be so solemn about art as other people are. The Village Improvement Society has undertaken an anti-tuberculosis campaign lately. I must say I think that's a whole lot more important than writing poetry."

"What's the matter with doing both, is my motto."

"I supposed I just took a low view of art!"

The smile with which Susan answered this was the most appreciative, humorous, relishing smile one young woman ever bestowed upon another.

In the same moment Mrs. Ray's grandfather's clock in the front hall struck six.

"What, Ellen! I only had ten minutes to stay, and I've stayed twenty. Look here! Don't Vermonters always go into the woods on Sunday afternoons in spring? Let's go, together, this Sunday."

"All right!"

"I wonder where," mused Sue. "We can't climb Stratton Glen, or Cock Hollow. The best we can do is to go and walk in the Fells. We'll see if we can find any arbutus: though that isn't likely. But we can find hepaticas, no doubt: or do you call 'em Mayflowers?"

"Mayflowers."

"Of course."

"Addertongue and trillium," added Ellen.

"Spring beauty and Dutchman's breeches."

"Foam flower——"

"Bellwort——"

"Solomon's seal and sarsaparilla!"

"We'll wear old dresses and take a bite of lunch; I'll

put up the lunch: faculty hoarding-houses aren't supposed to furnish it."

"Well! It'll be a picnic, then."

"The surest thing you know. You'll be ready at one o'clock, my cousin? I'll call for you. Bring a basket."

Sue was gone. She ran down Audubon Street, her gray merino skirt catapulting from her tennis heels, and the Roman scarf on her straw hat streaming its fringes widely.

Mrs. Ray rang the supper bell three times before Ellen heard it. Mrs. Ray had bought strawberries, thus early in the season, and was vexed to have them slighted. When at last Ellen did hear the bell and go down, she appreciated the strawberries. Everything contributed tonight to bring on the blue sky. It was a long time since she had had it before. There were golden lilies in a circular bed on the lawn, which she could see from the dining-room window. The unseasonably hot sun had sunk, and left that revivifying coolness which is the excuse of sultry weather. Mrs. Ray got out the hammock, and Mr. Ray hung it up, across the breezy corner of the piazza: but Ellen thought she needed a walk, to soak her lungs in the coolness. She went a new walk, out toward Jamaica Plain. She could have kissed Mr. and Mrs. Ray good-by—she could have come back from the corner and kissed them, so desperately sorry she felt for everybody who was old, who was practical, who was not going to make material for writing out of the fishman's lame horse and the Village Improvement Society, who was not beginning a friendship so brilliant and inconceivable.

Verses about Sue Redwood arranged themselves in her

mind several times, and were bounced out. Sometime perhaps she would try them. She would try to describe the curiously curling hair, the arched mouth and full cheek line, if not the character, so briskly sweet, so boldly warm! This mood of many-coated happiness was after all a little different from the blue sky. She knew what had brought it on. It was the slaking of that hidden thirst, that thirst for reason and clarity she now began to recognize and name. This happy mood had come with a fresh draught of new ideas about art and life. It had come from discovering a link and harmony where one had presupposed cross purposes. She could make verses of that, too; well, no, not verses: a daily theme, then.

What if between Sue Redwood and herself there were to be such a friendship as that between Montaigne and Étienne de la Bœtie?

She was late coming back from her walk, and in the meantime something very interesting and unlucky had happened.

The Oldenburys, who were blue-blooded, and had Cabots and Endicotts and Delanos and Brewsters and suchlike ancestors, had sent a letter to a Harvard senior whose Pilgrim parents on both sides they knew. On this circumstance Ellen was building extensive hopes that she might be invited to the Hasty Pudding spread in June. The gentleman, however, had not called upon her. In desperation of leaving a stone unturned, she had sent him, notwithstanding, a card to the Open Idler. On heavy paper embossed in crimson letters "Concord Hall" he had regretted; a previous engagement. All the time, of course, he might have been at the Open Idler, the

guest of another girl, not bothering himself to meet Ellen. Among the young golfing set in Tory Hill, such brands of conduct, while warmly condemned, were not unknown. Besides, he might have thought her sending him the invitation quite unwarranted. She wondered whether he thought her green, or too coming-on, or both; brazenly hoping, at all events, that by inviting him to the Idler she had nailed an invitation for herself to the Hasty Pudding. Secretly she might have doubts as to the extreme enjoyability, for her, of going to any spread at all. But, looking through other people's eyes, she saw the achievement of being invited as a triumph—a triumph, too, which would rather please Aunt Fran.

As to this Mr. Sayre's ever calling on her, she had long since given up any such notion. She did know a freshman or two, who had been known to call. But she really had more sense of companionship when those college athletes in running-shorts overtook her in the square than when these shy, dense youths, in Mrs. Ray's parlor, revolved their hat brims on their knees and tried to talk.

A senior, however, would naturally be a very different kettle of fish; and she was sharply disappointed when, on coming back from her walk, she was met by Mrs. Ray advancing with a small card glimmering in her palm.

"A gentleman to see me, you say, Mrs. Ray?"

"Two gentlemen. But only one left a card."

"Oh! Do let me see it. I believe it must have been Mr. Sayre."

"No—yes—let me see. 'Mr. Willis Bradford Sayre.' The other one told me his name, but I declare I've forgotten. Something like Alderman or Baldwin—'twasn't



either of those. Well! no matter. They had quite a time laughing about it. This one that left the card, he says to the other one:

“‘Where’s your card, Frank?’

“(There! That was his first name, anyway!)

“‘Frank, where’s your card,’ says he.

“‘Thinkses I, don’t ask me to remember no names!

“‘Card!’ says the other one, and he began to laugh. ‘I guess I left it in my gold cigar case,’ he says. ‘Madam,’ he says, ‘I’ll spell my name out for you.’ He did spell it out, but I don’t never remember names, never did and never will. It’s no matter, for of course they’ll call again. I invited them to. I said, ‘Gentlemen, call again, when Miss Graham’s at home,’ I said. They thanked me. The one that left the card, he says to the other, as they went down the steps, he said:

“‘Duty performed is a rainbow to the soul.’”

“How did they look?” inquired Ellen, trying to laugh.

“The one that left the card, he looked kind of a swell, but the other one, Frank as he called him, he looked kind of shabby. At all events they were great friends. They went off arm in arm.”

This was on Saturday evening in the middle week of April. Ellen had reason afterward, or thought she had reason, to remember it.

Sunday morning was cloudy, fresh, and soft. She went to Christ Church as usual, and as usual enjoyed the hymns, and the blue and gold text, “Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty,” over the chancel. It was not such a perfect day for the woods as she had hoped. At least it did not seem the regulation weather for picnics; and yet, when she and Susan reached the Fells, at about

two o'clock, and began wandering in that sweet wilderness, the cloudy light seemed lovelier than a dappling sun coming through pine and hemlock, beech and birch. Crackling innumerable twigs and bedded brown leaves covering just such small chasms of hollow rock as abounded in the Seminary and Sugar woods at home, they came, just as they might have done at home at this season, upon a little plot of blue hepaticas, or less prized pink and white ones; flimsy little purple-veined spring beauties, which came up, curly root and all, when you tried to pick them: and ill-smelling crimson trillium, with its ugly, vigorous Vermont name of "stinking Benjamin." There were speckled plantations of the buff-colored trumpet-bells of the addertongue, and ferny-leaved, wax-white Dutchman's breeches. It was a true home April ramble. Susan kept calling, coo-eeing across some small glen, or plumping down suddenly on her knees to pick some bashful darling of the forest: and sometimes she would sing:

"The flowers o' the forest are all wede away."

Ellen, who had often heard her Scotch father try to sing it, joined in, a little off the key. They had met nobody, and had the sense of having the whole vast wood to themselves. They spread out their lunch on the rocks as the afternoon began to wane; and when it was eaten, they still sat luxuriously lolling on the rocks and talking.

"Are *you* going to write, Sue?" Ellen began by asking.

"I hope so."

"What? Poetry?"

"Poetry's the very last thing I'd ever try to write!

I haven't a bit of enjoyment of poetry unless it expresses an idea new enough to be worth while expressing: and then I'd rather, nine times out of ten, have it in prose."

"But don't you read poetry at all for pleasure in the form of it?"

"Well—I admit I like the sound of it when it has plenty of sense to ballast it—when it's better said in meter than it could be in prose; otherwise not. It's the fault of my ear, I suppose."

"But take Swinburne, for instance," persisted Ellen. "I don't read Swinburne as much as I used to, it's true. And yet I feel all the beauty he packs into his lovely long lines. Don't you like the chorus in '*Atalanta*,' 'When the hounds of spring'? But all he says there is that spring is a pleasant season, and that a lot of mythology clusters round it. If you come right down to its skeleton!"

"I know. It's my ear, you see. It ought to hypnotize my brain, but it can't."

"Oh, what a lot of lovely sounds you miss!"

"But then, you see, I love music."

"Well—yes. But I begrudge your missing '*Atalanta in Calydon*.'"

"Would *you* care to write lovely sounds without much sense, Ellen?"

Ellen thought this over.

"Before I met you, Sue, by jinks, I would!"

Sue shook her head.

"I don't believe you'd have been contented with such poetry when it was done. You see I pay it the compliment of calling it poetry."

"I don't know that I would have been quite con-

tented with it," said Ellen. "I'd want to speak *for* somebody or something. I'm like those painters that always wanted a human being in their landscapes. Only I would be glad and proud to express the feelings of animals. *They* get the rough edge of things, all right!"

"You want to express the feelings of somebody or something that's getting the rough edge of things, do you?"

"I would, if I could. The trouble is, it's all such a cauldron of indignation and disgust in my mind, I could never make anything beautiful out of it; I don't believe I could. The only way I could make anything beautiful would be to go back to olden times, somewhere in history, where I could feel that things were at peace."

"Fictitious spot!" cried Susan. "Things never were at peace."

"Still there was an idyllic age in this country," Ellen persisted.

"Slavery was going on, prisons and asylums and poor-houses were filthy, unhealthy,—more so even than they are now!—and married women had no rights, and laborers worked from sunrise to sunset. The death rate was pretty high in those idyllic times, Ellen! There were lots of funerals of babies!"

"Still there was something idyllic about stage-coaches, and hoops, and pantalettes, and bake-ovens, and so forth."

Sue smiled.

"'Farewell, Romance!' the cave men said,'" she quoted.

"Anyway, the old times fascinate me. I could read about 'em in Mrs. Earle's books forever. Perhaps our

descendants will look back on steam engines just as fondly as I do on stage-coaches; let 'em then; that's only fair.—What are *you* going to write?" asked Ellen suddenly. "Novels?"

"Plain modern novels are what I want to write. Nothing symbolic or mystic at all. Just plain everyday life. Though of course I can't write about it in a state of anarchy, the way it looks to the naked eye—I'll have to have some connecting notion running underneath."

"Why?"

"My goodness, Ellen, what a question."

"But answer it, Sue. Why not take a slice of life all in a stew, as it is, and write it down?"

"You've just said yourself *you'd* have to go back to a place where there was a little peace. You'd find it, you think, in stage-coaches; I think you're mistaken about *that*; but no matter. I think *I'll* find peace enough to work in, if I get a connecting idea under the welter. In fact, I think I've got it."

"Still that doesn't answer the question. Why not take a slice of welter and make a book of it?"

"Cui bono?"

"For art's sake."

"What art is there in a phonograph?"

"Well, Sue, I guess you've got me there. I guess you're right. To tell the truth, I don't want to read a book of welter."

"You couldn't find one, if you did, my dear woman. Nobody ever looked at nature and tried to describe her without tucking in a prescription for her complexion, somewhere."

"What's your prescription, Sue? You said you

thought you had one—or at least a connecting idea——”

“Why, I suppose Reason.”

“Oh!”

“What would yours be, do you think?”

“Well, Kindness, I guess, if I had one.”

“Not so worse!”

“Every time I see you, you go and dig up the ground of my mind to plant some new notion in it, Sue.”

“No, I don’t. I just stroll round the garden to see what’s already growing there.”

“I should very soon,” said Ellen musingly, “get into the habit of having to talk over every belief I have in the world, with you.”

“I never had a sister,” said Sue.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE YOUNG MAN WHOSE NAME MRS. RAY FORGOT

"No use!" Ellen addressed herself. "I capitulate. I can't resist writing one more piece of verse."

She sat down on the floor by her desk window at Wakerobin, and leaned out into the Vermont June. She had been at home from college a week.

The teasing itch to try verses on Sue Redwood had kept nudging her ever since their first meeting, after the suffrage club. Once already she had yielded to it: namely on that Sunday evening of their walk in the Fells. But then she had tried to write an outward description. She had not known how to penetrate, in verse, beyond a picture, with what it might convey, or hint, of force and charm, of the mobile, clear face, lucid eyes, and blithely, confidently, friendlily smiling mouth; the swift running, and clear woodland calling, and all the light, brisk motions of the small, wiry body. As far as it went, it was very pretty. She had finished it, and called it "Sylvia"—because they had happened to be in the woods that day, presumably. Now she wanted to write a very different description. She wanted to put in the mind, the heart and will, of her friend; the essential greatness of her nature, as it seemed to show itself. Feeling a conquering power in these aspects of her friend's character, she called the verses "Alexandra."

The afternoon of this day week had been the afternoon of spreads; when the unknown Mr. Sayre had lived up to his possibilities, and sent her a card for the Hasty Pudding. She had a quite pretty white dress to wear and had spent, what so often was the case, a fairly pleasant time, of which, however, the best part was the realization that she had achieved the Hasty Pudding. The next best part of it, to be quite candid with herself, had been the strawberries and cream. Mr. Sayre had a bevy of guests. He had a bevy of henchmen, too, to beau them about; but the henchman who beau'd Ellen about was evidently *not* the shabby stranger named Frank, who had called on that Saturday evening in April. She looked about the hall and wondered which was he. Remotely she wondered how some girl with more assurance and skill would have managed to ask Mr. Sayre if she mightn't meet the friend who had called with him that evening. But now, of course, she would never see that shabby, laughing, rather interesting unknown man.

After all, the spread was really very pleasant, in the usual mild degree of entertainments where people sat round, or stood round, aimlessly. Of course one felt always a little awkward, a little like a young calf. One expected to. Time rather dragged, as usual, at intervals. People had described "agonies" of bashfulness. This was nothing like that. Still it was rather nice to get home, and take off the pretty white dress and best petticoats, and find, with some relief, that they were still perfectly fresh, and could be worn once more before washing; and to know all the time that you had really been at the Hasty Pudding spread, and that at this time tomorrow you would be at home.



And here she was.

There was a desk now in her old cubby corner of the hall, where she had once kept her dolls. It crowded the wee place fearfully, but it was cosy beyond words. The desk was a soap-order desk, a premium that came with ten dollars' worth of Rising Sun laundry soap. On the top shelf she had all the books of poetry she owned; ten or fifteen Rolfe Shakespeares, a fat green Wordsworth, and a thin brown Keats; second-hand copies of "Atlanta" and "Laus Veneris," and three dark-blue Canterbury Poets with white labels: they were George Herbert, Matthew Arnold, and the Irish Minstrelsy.

The second verses on Sue (refused by the *Atlantic*, *Scribner's*, the *Century*, and others) were not the only ones she wrote. As the summer went on, she found her pen more and more balky at the crises of stories. She sat every day at her desk and wrote, it is true. "Please make an excuse for me, for I want to write," disposed of the old ladies from far townships who were always driving in to call and ask for "Mary's Ellen." She was suffused with a nebulous desire to write, and a visionary, scattering imagination. With a sense of being very busy and methodical, she would begin her desk-mornings by looking over her notebook, trying, but sometimes in vain, not to see every notion she had set down in it under the guise of potential verses. She would meticulously alter these jottings, and combine, piecemeal, two or three of them into a thin small plot for a story—a plot always of successive, complete, and never of tangled, events. A long time she would enjoyably spend thus; and then would draw her writing tablet toward her, and for the

fifteenth or sixteenth time elaborate the opening for a story—intensifying the adjectives, and changing the heroine's name to something more melodious and symbolical—something more like "Clare Doria Forey." Always she would bump her head in vain against the stone walls of the crises she could always plan but never write; always she would run into character after character, stupidly standing where last left, grinning like a Cheshire cat. Helplessly and idiotically her characters stood round; and when they had been standing, first on one leg, then on the other, for a long time, she would conclude that her morning's work was done, and with a joyful sigh, would begin a letter to Sue.

Ambitions and opinions took up a great part of these schoolgirlishly frequent letters. In the middle of that summer a serial discussion of woman suffrage took place between herself and Sue, in which she soon found herself taking a far livelier interest than in her paralytic stories. It was she who had begun it by telling Sue that, to her delight, her Aunt Fran was becoming interested in woman suffrage.

"Aunt Fran really has leanings," she wrote. "She calls herself 'very opinionated' anyway; and lately she wanted our village to bond itself, and own its own water-works, and luckily for the cause, the men voted the other way. Both my aunts went up to the village meeting where it was decided, and Aunt Fran kept trying to stand up and say something, and Aunt Sallie kept pulling her down. I believe my Aunt Fran is something like your Great-aunt Jane in Tewkesbury that had the duck-pond. Anyway, she's beginning to think it's queer that an educated single woman shouldn't be allowed to vote, when

every ignorant day laborer, that doesn't own the spade he digs with, can vote away her property!"

Sue's answer to this at once plunged into the dispute. She wrote that Ellen's letter sounded as if she thought well-to-do, educated people needed extra special protection against the powerful influence of the poor.

Re-presented in this way, Ellen's view galled her; but she stuck to her colors so far as to answer that it was "just the anomaly of the thing."

"It does seem so ridiculous that Henry Spalding, down the valley road, for instance, who's always in debt, and can't spell his own name, should be allowed to vote when my intelligent aunts are not!"

Sue replied:

"If you just call it ridiculous that your aunts haven't the right to vote, of course I most emphatically and indignantly agree with you; it's an outrage on the town, state, and country to muzzle half the sense and morality of the nation, and chain it up at a safe distance from politics. But it doesn't, my dear Ellen, seem *at all* ridiculous, to me, that a man who is economically submerged, struggling against odds with poverty (whether the odds are partly his own natural inefficiency, or not) who is handicapped by pitifully and shamefully small educational advantages—it doesn't seem to me at all ridiculous that such a man, who needs the vote so much, should have it. Does it really seem ridiculous to you? But of course not! From him that hath not, you'd be the last person to take away (but thank God it can't be done!) even that which he hath."

Ellen was persuaded in the organ of her persuadability, her heart, or call it her moral will, by this appeal, which

was merely a match to the tinder already waiting within her, stored up from the fishman's horse, the garbage street, Carrie's lonely meals, and many another kaleidoscopic impression, for many years past. The only feeble protest she made was to say in her next letter that she didn't think Henry Spalding was qualified to vote. He couldn't possibly understand the questions involved.

Sue wrote back:

"Of course not! The point is, though,—I think the point is that if Henry Spalding doesn't know himself what he wants, nobody else can possibly know."

"Other people," wrote Ellen, "might know what was best for him."

This appeared to be a red rag to Susan. She wrote back that she saw the cloven hoof whenever she heard that "sanctimonious expression," "best for." She declared that it sounded altogether too much like what husbands used to say about wives, and masters about slaves, and kings about people; and she added maliciously:

"Perhaps it's exactly what Henry Spalding is thinking about your Aunt Fran and the waterworks, at this very minute. I can just hear Henry Spalding saying to his neighbor that men know a good deal better than women what's best for them."

"Well, Sue," wrote Ellen, "you've converted me to another of your ideas. Though I don't think I ever wanted to take away the vote from Henry Spalding."

Sometimes, in her letters to Sue, Ellen used to sketch out her rather anaemic plots, and describe her characters. Sue in reply said more than once:

"Those stories of yours sound more like lyrics, to me."  
Once she wrote:

"Father says that plot of yours about the old woman and the poplar tree would make a better sonnet than anything else. A landscape sonnet he says."

Ellen read that letter over several times, with a sort of gratified resentment, to think that Professor Redwood, who had stopped her from writing verses, should now be irresponsibly encouraging her to write them. She declined to change her conception of the old woman and the poplar tree. She went on, all summer, beginning her balky, sulky stories, and polishing her beginnings over and over and over. Everybody said, if you wanted to make money by writing, write short stories. And Jim was anxious to take the scientific course at Princeton before entering the medical school, which would mean hard sledding for her father; so it would be extremely advisable to begin at once to write short stories and sell them. Susan sent up from Nantucket De Maupassant's "Odd Number," and advised that it should be read, marked, and digested. Ellen, however, read "A Piece of String" and revolted at it. The feverish wrong-headedness of it put her into a temper. It was as bad as the nightmare accidents in "Far from the Madding Crowd" and "Tess." She wrote hotly to Sue that she *wouldn't* write like that if she could.

Ellen was not seeing very much of Julia this summer. The fault was about evenly divided between them. Ellen found it much more invigorating to write to Sue, and have letters from her, than to go down the valley to see Julia, who had so much sentimental sag in her voice lately. It was undoubtedly Webster Willets. He had been down from Ox River twice already since college closed, to see her. Ellen knew, because Cousin Celia,

whenever she stopped to sell cream cheese, would tell her. The affair troubled Julia's sisters and brothers somewhat; chiefly, perhaps, on intellectual considerations. Webster was never the fellow who would have fallen in with Oldenbury notions about the relative importance of things; indeed, one could see him, in fancy, trying to stir up the slow pace of the Oldenburys, to remodel their beautiful old house, and use intensive methods on their crop-bare farm. Ellen's objections went deeper, and were harder to pin down into concrete language. Julia's toleration of Webster exasperated her, and even aroused her so seldom aroused contempt. She never said so to herself, however, or analyzed what it was which made her obscurely irritated if Julia, according to their old wont, talked about poetry when they met. Deep, very deep, like rock beneath her impatience and scorn was a sense of loyalty—perhaps Julia had it too—*there* was a thought! Something insistent, tender, unreasonable, would keep the old lamp trimmed and burning. In fact Ellen was conscious of a sort of jog-trot constancy in her loves. They couldn't be rooted out: like legendary orchids, they could live on air.

The great achievement of the summer was finishing one tiny story, or rather still life picture, of a tired farmer's wife with a sort of Daltonism, red and green arabesques dancing biliously before her eyes. A pseudo-radical magazinelet, about the size of a Hood's Sarsaparilla Almanac, accepted this, with the jovial note:

"But, bless your soul, we don't pay anything!"

Pay anything! One was grateful that they didn't charge anything.

This so-called story being printed (at once) and many

copies of the magazinelet circulated in Tory Hill by the fond, fatuous aunts, Ellen felt that she had accomplished something considerable in the literary line, and took to dreaming, not to say dozing, at her desk in the cubby-hole, on hot August afternoons when thunderstorms were brewing.

"Why, I thought your forte was poetry, all about loving and dying," said Jim when he was shown the printed evidence of his sister's genius in *The Ishmaelite*.

"No, Jim, I never write verses any more—hardly ever. I was advised—at college—not to."

"Well, this would make a better piece of poetry than it does a story, anyway."

"The new story writers use that form of successive pictures a good deal," said Ellen instructively. "I write all mine that way. I sent one off yesterday to *McQuaid's* in three parts—each a picture: all the things that happened, happened in between."

"Yes—out of sight of the reader. I bet the public won't stand for that."

"Time will tell," said Ellen, but she felt a little shaken.

"There don't enough happen in this story, as you call it, to suit me, anyway," persisted Jim. "I guess it's written all right, though, as far as the style goes. I could prescribe for your heroine at all events; you've done her symptoms O. K."

Jim had said, with such deceptive cheerfulness that he succeeded in keeping them all from guessing a twentieth part of his disappointment, that he would give up college altogether, since his father could manage no more, even by the utmost endeavor, than to finance his four

years at the medical school. But the aunts were unwilling to let him give up college altogether, and did a great deal of anxious contriving about helping him to a degree of Bachelor of Science at Princeton, if he could cover the four years' course there in three years. The aunts filled many sheets of pads with figures, and Aunt Fran could be seen sometimes, even when visitors were present, absently counting on her fingers. It was managed at last, by a dip into the carefully husbanded principal of the Misses Mowbray. To dip into principal seemed sacrilegious; but they could curtail their annual New York holiday for a few years, and live within the reduced income. It was all figured out, and Jim vowed silently in his heart he would repay it in letter and spirit. He was sure he could earn something more than his board by working in vacations. He had catalogues from Princeton and the College of Physicians and Surgeons on his bureau, and studied them in bed every night.

It was on an afternoon of one of those August days when the mountains were getting blue and hazy, at the hour when the low sun began scooping out the Hollow and the Glen, and pouring into them the ice-blue shadows, that a note on the monogrammed paper of the Windward House was brought down by a bellboy and left for Miss Graham. It was signed "Franklin Tallman," and it asked with mysterious brevity for an interview.

"Who's your beau, Ellen?" asked Jim.

"Why, I never heard of him before."

"I suppose the man's perfectly respectable, to be staying at the Windward House," said Aunt Fran. "Better write and tell him to call about ten tomorrow morning, as we're going out to the bridge tonight."



"Probably an agent," suggested Aunt Sallie, with whom the wish was father to the thought.

"Agents don't stay at the Windward House, Aunt Sal!" cried Jim.

"Well, he might have had the impertinence to walk in there and use their stationery."

"But not to send it by a bellhop."

"That's a fact. Well, Ellen, I suppose you'll have to write and tell him yes."

"I have, Aunt Sallie. I sent an answer back by the bellboy."

The two aunts stood rather in the respective relations of father and mother to Ellen and Jim; Aunt Fran always reacting with suspicion and hostility toward girls who were inclined to show Jim any attention; and Aunt Sallie tolerating these, but opposing a soft yet obstinate breastwork to any young man who seemed to have any idea of hovering about Ellen. Their rôles really suited very well, for Jim was already a good deal of a ladies' man, and Aunt Fran rather enjoyed a shindy; while thus far only Webster Willets, for one short term, had disturbed Aunt Sallie's more indolent, peaceable disposition.

Ellen said the stranger must be an editor, who had seen her story in the *Ishmaelite*, and wanted a serial for *Harper's* or *Scribner's*. She made all she could of this, to luxuriate the better in her own mind in the sanguine secret belief that he was that very fellow whose name was something like Alderman, or Baldwin, who had called with Mr. Sayre, in Cambridge, in April.

She put on her pink and black striped muslin, in opposition to Aunt Fran, who stood out for a lawn waist

and duck skirt. Her fine hair had been too lately washed to look well, do what she would with it. Ting! the doorbell rang ahead of time, but it was only Cousin Celia Oldenbury with the cream cheese, as usual. Ellen went down to sit on the piazza. She had "Joseph Vance" to read. A man was slanting across the street; but it was only Mr. Willets with the Willetses' morning mail. He always brought it down. Another man was coming down the marble walk, crossing over further up the street; he stopped to look at the cannas in flower by the Barnhavens' side door. . . . Anyway, it was no Tory Hill inhabitant. He was rather good-looking, and very well set up. He was very well dressed in flannels, white flannels with a hair-line stripe of black, she could see, as he drew nearer. . . . How very nice-looking! No, he went by. The long slate street was empty.

Round from the other corner, while she had been looking at the well-dressed, well-set-up stranger, had come a rather ill-dressed but well-assured young man. He had a somewhat Israelitish look. He was short and slight: his eyes were quite dark, and set deep in valleys on each side of the high, long mountain of his nose. He came up the first of the little walks and rang the front doorbell. Ellen jumped up.

"Oh! Is this Mister——"

"Franklin Tallman, madam . . . oiselle."

"How do you do? I am Miss Graham."

"I remember *you*, Miss Graham."

"Oh?"

"But of course you don't remember me."

"For the best of reasons!" said Ellen, thinking, "He is the very man!"

"Of course you don't. I saw you at the Hasty Pudding spread. What in the world you went home so early for——!"

"Why, I thought I stayed very late!"

"Late! Well!—I don't suppose I'd remember you, though, except for Sayre having told me that you were the Annex girl that wrote that thing in the *Monthly* about the village,

'All lulled and lost in brier and fern.'

Do you know, I got Sayre to take me up to call on you, one evening back in the spring, on the strength of that poem—verses, I mean, of yours? But you were out."

"*You* were that man, then!"

"Think what you missed!"

"If you sit there, Mr. Tallman, I'm afraid you'll rock off the steps. Take this chair—it's safer, really."

"'Tis man's perdition to be safe," said Mr. Tallman, hitching his chair nearer the edge. He had a homely, firm, convinced, and convincing mouth. Aunt Fran wouldn't have found much caste in him. He looked more like that line in the poem:

"Too proud to care from whence I came."

He now openly and brazenly consulted his watch.

"Well, Miss Graham, that poem—or at least those verses—of yours——"

("Courtly!" thought Ellen.)

"—in the *Monthly* are my excuse for coming to see you. I'm on *McQuaid's Magazine* now, and you've been sending in stories to us once or twice lately——"

"Which you always send back with a printed slip, on blue bond paper."

"Of course! What else could we do? Nothing ever *happens* in your stories, Miss Graham! I'm the first reader they generally come to, as I'm the smallest fry in the office, and I *have* to turn them down. They're so awfully static. And yet there's such a lot of local color, atmosphere, and feeling for human values in them! They always make me think of that poem—those verses, I mean, for it wasn't quite a poem, you know,—in the *Monthly*. 'By Silver Water's westerling turn.' That's the way your stories always begin. 'Beneath the rocks of Windward Steep.' They're melodious, they're picturesque, those opening paragraphs of yours. Why, there was one you sent in, where you said, in the first sentence, 'it was a lucent and buxom morning'! A little precious, perhaps," continued Mr. Tallman judicially, "but in a piece of verse——"

"Just let me tell you what happened to me at college, Mr. Tallman!"

"Well, what?"

"Why, I *always* wanted to write verses: I *never* wanted to write stories."

"O my prophetic soul!"

"But you see, I showed some of my verses to Professor Redwood, and he said—he told me not to write 'em any more."

"He did, eh? May jackasses sit on his grandmother's grave!"

"Yes—he said I'd better go on loving poetry, and teach other people to love it, and let it go at that."

"Nothing very remarkable about that advice,

Miss Graham, except the fact that apparently you took it."

"Why, yes, I burned up all my verses, like Hindoo widows. Of course, I must confess, I've——"

"Regretted it?"

"Well—nothing." She thought, on the whole, she wouldn't mention, at present, having written any more verses.

"Well, of course you're the doctor. My advice isn't to be compared to old Redwood's; but still——"

("But still you think it is!")

"Still, I've been in a magazine office now a couple of months, and I was on the *Monthly* my last year in college." Mr. Tallman said this with that significant assurance of his, which made it sound like:

"I've been chief editor of the *Atlantic* for fifty years."

"Would you really advise me to try verses, Mr. Tallman?"

"Shouldn't like to countermand old Redwood's advice, of course; especially since you saw fit to take it. But I'll say this: this is very diplomatic, Miss Graham; and it's really what I came to see you to say:

"If you ever write any verses, please send 'em to *McQuaid's*. If you've got any on hand, that escaped the fate of the Hindoo widows, please send 'em. If you ever decide to take those lyrical opening paragraphs of your stories and turn them back where they belong, into verses, why, please send 'em to *McQuaid's*."

"Well, I've got a few pieces of verse upstairs now, Mr. Tallman, that I've written since the funeral of the others."

"Well! Why don't you look over them, then, Miss Graham, and maybe rewrite some of them, if you can see how, and send—refrain as before?"

"Why, I will. I'm ever so much obliged to *you*, Mr. Tallman. It certainly was awfully kind of you——"

Mr. Tallman leaned further back, and let out a laugh, a whistle, and a low, musical:

"Kind! very kind."

"It *was*."

"Why, Miss Graham, it was very kind to *McQuaid's Magazine* for me to take the first day of my one week's vacation and come away up here to hunt up a new verse-writer for it. Wasn't it?"

He looked with intense solemnity at Ellen, and she, feeling very strange in this odd situation of sitting here, in perfectly good daylight hours, talking to a young man who seemed to be enjoying himself well enough, and actually in no great hurry to be off, looked rather uncertainly at him. He continued:

"When I wanted to climb Windward Mountain instead."

"Well, then——"

"I wanted so *much* to climb Windward Mountain! Instead of coming here, I mean."

He still looked gravely at her: and at last that beauless young woman smiled a very small smile and turned her head away, in agreeable embarrassment.

"An act of considerable self-denial on my part, you see."

"Yes indeed!"

"I'm glad you appreciate it, Miss Graham."

"Indeed I do!"

"It does a man good to perform such an act of self-sacrifice. I feel now that I have the moral power to perform it again."

Ellen had a very becoming blush, and it came up now, just as her Aunt Fran, spick in a clean cambric, came out the front door and round the corner of the piazza, with her general nice look of health, cold-water baths, and shrewd appreciation of human motives in general, and present company's in particular.

"This is Mr. Tallman—my aunt, Miss Mowbray."

Mr. Tallman did not look at all bashful under Miss Frances Mowbray's eyes. He did not say that he was just going. Instead, he reseated himself a fraction of a second after Miss Mowbray had sat down, and looked exceedingly at home.

Miss Frances said:

"Is this your first coming to Tory Hill, Mr. Tallman?"

"Yes—I've been here exactly seven hours, Miss Mowbray. I've learned that 'midnight' in Vermont means three o'clock in the morning. I had almost three hours of sleep last night, and I've had a good walk this morning. I'm going up Windward Mountain tomorrow."

"All alone?" asked Ellen, thinking of the picnic to be held on top of the mountain on Thursday.

"Shall I get lost, Miss Graham, do you think? So much the better! It wouldn't be the first time I ever got lost. I was lost once on a bigger mountain than this, in Switzerland."

He rose calmly, in his ill-fitting trousers and hitching coat, which looked so ludicrously unlike the Windward House and Switzerland.

"May I call again, Miss Mowbray, on you and Miss Graham?"

Miss Sarah Mowbray had been all this time sitting in her own pleasant window-way, thinking a long way ahead. She had been thinking, Heaven bless her, that if anything really came of this mysterious young man dropping out of the clouds at Ellen's feet—so, with her fatherly jealousy, it already appeared to her—she must be quiet, resigned, and play that difficult self-effacing part so light-heartedly demanded of parents by the American code. Still thinking she would not go downstairs, she went down: and resolving not to go out on the piazza, she went out. She appeared, with an impalpable air of challenge, round the corner of the piazza, and had the young man introduced to her, at exactly the moment when he had made the request to call again. It thus happened that no one answered him: and it also happened that his request was not repeated.



## CHAPTER XIII

### DUST BEGINS TO GATHER ON THE DESK IN THE CUBBY-HOLE

It was astonishing to find that for once Aunt Fran had been less critical than Aunt Sallie. That was a searching commentary that was passed on Ellen's young man, at dinner. Nothing derogatory had escaped the jealous eyes of the fatherly aunt.

Ellen remembered, now, freshly, how her Aunt Sallie's plentiful young men (of whom some were married, but many remained) all had highly agreeable, and even old-school, manners. Whereas Aunt Fran tolerated anybody who was what she called "interesting": and had a few rather freakish gentlemen among her friends. Aunt Sallie warmly disliked freakishness, and still more warmly did she dislike arrogance, or anything she could construe into a sign of arrogance. Her code belonged to the days when admirers and partners were so thick that they could be kept in their places. She was an accomplished snubber. Ellen remembered how she had sharpened her velvet-padded claws on Webster Willets. It certainly seemed to Ellen hideously in keeping that her Aunt Sallie should have innocently—was it innocent of her?—interrupted at the exact moment to prevent Aunt Fran from saying, "We shall be happy to see you." It crossed Ellen's mind that some such experience was what

had led Thomas Hardy to write those nightmare novels wherein people's whole happiness was frustrated by one malignant chance.

There was, however, a moon that night; and something in the swishing of the summer evening wind in the maple tops, or some bits of "Yarrow Revisited" that floated through her mind in the evening;—something, at any rate, waved a flag of truce to trouble in her heart. Not that she wanted to go to sleep, particularly. She did go to sleep at first, and then waked up and remembered that the green shade on the south window had got stuck, and would not pull all the way down. The moon was shining in from that quarter. It made the room wakefully bright. And besides, her right arm had a sort of feeling running through it, like what people described as the beginning of paralysis. She had it every time she thought of shaking hands with Mr. Tallman, or of some of those expressions of his and the way his voice sounded when he said them:

"'Tis man's perdition to be safe."

"Shall I get lost? So much the better."

All alone, here, in the middle of the night, for the pure, silly pleasure of it, she turned away her face from an imaginary Mr. Tallman, and smiled that foolish, small smile again. She did it over and over. What other fancies, clean, bold, virginal, she had, all consorted well with that beam of moonlight striking squarely across her bed, covering her pillow with whiter light than that of the day.

At breakfast Aunt Fran said promptly:

"Why don't you get Jennie Willets to let you bring this young man on her picnic, Ellen?"

"Do you think she'd like it, Frances?" put in Aunt Sallie.

"Like it! yes, be tickled to death."

"Well—I suppose an extra man's always welcome." It seemed a good deal, somehow, for Aunt Sallie to admit.

Ellen said, after a decent interval of apparently thinking it over:

"Believe I will, Aunt Fran. I wonder if he'll come?"

"Oh, I guess so. Better see Jennie and then write him a note, and Jim can mail it before he goes to the links."

As if to undo her semi-complaisance, Aunt Sallie inquired:

"Didn't you all think he was rather a self-sufficient young man?"

"Oh, come now, Aunt Sal! you're getting altogether too darned pernickety," said Jim. "I thought he was quite a decent fellow; though of course I'd know he wasn't a Princeton man."

Jennie Willets graciously consented to the proposal to enrich her picnic by another lunch-carrying, girl-boosting creature. Ellen wrote several notes, and at last decided to send one, not because she was content with it, but because she had used up all her best note paper.

"I saw your beau in the post-office, and handed him your note, so I saved you two cents," Jim announced when he came back from his foursome at noon.

"Oh. What did he say?"

"Say—didn't say anything. Just grinned."

Ellen now laughed at the superstitious certainty she had felt that Jim would lose the note. Still it seemed

certain that something would prevent Mr. Tallman from coming on the picnic.

After tea that evening, when they were all sitting on the piazza, Aunt Fran said:

"Ellen, haven't you heard from that Mr. Tillman yet?"

"Tallman, Aunt Fran."

"Tallman! What a name for a fellow about five feet three!" shouted Jim, whose own lank length lay sprawling in the hammock, with his bag of golf clubs across his knees. "Poor little runt, though, he can't help being such a sawed-off."

"St. Paul was a short man! And so was Napoleon! And Keats!" cried Ellen.

"How do you know how big St. Paul was?"

"Well, the tradition——"

"What I want to know is, have you heard yet from Mr. Tillman—Tallman—or haven't you?" demanded her elder aunt.

"I haven't heard a word from him," confessed Ellen, in a voice made up, in equal parts, of exasperation at her Aunt Fran for asking, and of fear that her Aunt Sallie would remark, as she did immediately:

"I'm afraid Mr. Tallman hasn't been brought up to very much *savoir faire*."

"Well, Sarah, I rather liked the young man. He seemed to have a good deal of faith in himself."

"Oh, certainly! Faith in himself!"

Whether Mr. Tallman heard this, and the remark or two which preceded it, and whether, in that case, he applied them to himself, were questions the family could not settle at breakfast the next morning. Miss Sarah

Mowbray, who had been a trifle embarrassed when Mr. Tallman appeared suddenly on the short marble path to the ell piazza, had hardened over night to the point of saying she didn't care. Perhaps, on the whole, it would have done him good if he *had* heard. He could stand a little letting down, she believed.

At the time when it happened Ellen had certainly been very much frightened. She had turned her rocking-chair, when they first sat down on the piazza after tea, into a position to command the street up-townward. And yet she had not seen him coming at all; he had startled her as much as anybody; and the blood had rushed up to her face, and pounded in her ears at the horror of it.

But Mr. Tallman had come up the side steps without showing in any manner that he had overheard. He had a nice handshake; even Aunt Sallie admitted that. He sat down on the top step, though Jim lugged himself and his golf clubs out of the hammock and offered it.

"I came round," he said, "to thank Miss Graham for the invitation to go on the picnic on Thursday. I shall certainly enjoy it very much. What shall I bring?"

"Why, you're company," Ellen cried. "You needn't bring a single sandwich."

"Can't I buy something at Willets and Barnhaven's store?"

"Oh, I'll tell you—if you could bring some peaches!"

"Peaches it is, then."

Miss Frances was smiling, but her sister's face, in the streak of lamplight from the hall window, looked pinched and irritable. She got up and went in, saying she had to write letters. Jim took himself off, after lugging his clubs into the house, to go up to the hotel and talk golf

with the other members of his late foursome; and Aunt Fran only stayed a few moments longer.

Mr. Tallman then leaned luxuriously back against the piazza post, and conversed in agreeable trivialities of a local character for some time. Presently he asked if it would be in order for Ellen to "put on that scarf, or whatever it is, that hangs on the back of your chair, and come over in that field I see rolling up to that little piece of woods, for a cross country walk of about an eighth of a mile?—far enough to get in amongst those millions of fireflies?"

She couldn't see why not, and seconded the motion.

The Ayes had it.

She put on the scarf, and they went over, across the road and into the wet grass which quickly spoiled her fresh blue feather-patterned muslin, and brand-clean white petticoats. They rounded the schoolhouse, looking so ghostly in the half-clouded moonlight, and went through the turnstile into the steep wet field that ran along below the Ledge Woods. Everything had exactly that queerly beautiful look—that combination of vividness and unreality—that it gives a familiar landscape to look at it upside down. They walked along so near the Ledge woods that the blackberry bushes, tangled among the birch and sumach, sometimes clutched at their sleeves and invited them into the ferny rock-ledges within. They did not walk very fast. The fireflies wove feathery fireworks all round them, and gave them the sensation of having to extricate themselves, step by step, from Lilliputian webs. Once or twice she took his hand or arm across a roughish spot, or a clump of prairie weed. The air was all on edge with dampness.

"Nothing languid about your Vermont evenings," said Mr. Tallman.

"Indeed no!"

"As soon as the air gets heavy, I suppose your mountains catch hold of the clouds and pull down a thunderstorm."

"Yes; and don't we have the beautiful thunderstorms!"

"You like 'em?"

"Why, I'd be willing to have a thunderstorm for a Christmas present, any year."

"I can always fraternize with people that like storms. I've seen some pretty big ones at sea. Luckily I had rough crossings both ways, when I went abroad last year."

"Weren't you seasick?"

"Oh yes, awfully. I forgot it, though, in the excitement of watching that churning sea of ink and soap-suds, and feeling the rousing whacks it gave the boat underneath. Besides, I wasn't allowed to be seasick. I worked my way over."

There was something very "becoming to a man" in this statement, Ellen thought. She had a thrilled feeling that he never allowed himself to be waited on.

They had come back to the road by a cow-path, wet and soft, and their heads had been brushed by the boughs of neglected old apple trees as they emerged into the road again.

"Good-by, Ceres, Flora, and Pomona!" cried the young man. "I hope your shoes aren't wet, Miss Graham."

"Wet! Why, they're soaked—reeking! So must yours be, too."

"Are you afraid of catching cold?"

Ellen laughed.

"No? Someway I knew you weren't."

They came up on the piazza, and sat down again.

"You see, Miss Graham, I don't want to leave until I've made you thoroughly understand that I accept the invitation to the picnic."

"I don't believe, then, that I quite understand yet."

However, he did not seem in a very talkative mood, but he sat on the step, reaching up and playing with his fingers on the strings of the hammock as if it were some sort of zither. Ellen leaned back and rocked. After a while Miss Frances Mowbray came out and seated herself in the corner of the piazza, and took a part in the conversation, such as it was. The conversation, under her stimulus, spruced up a little. Then Miss Frances halted it to give full effect to the hall clock striking ten, and though oblivious at the moment, Mr. Tallman composedly took his leave a few moments later.

"Well, Ellen," said Aunt Fran, seating herself again after his departure, "how do you like this young man?"

"I like him! Very much!"

"Well—so do I—on the whole."

She rocked for a moment, and then inquired:

"What do you know about him?"

"His father's a country doctor, up in Maine, somewhere."

"Um-um."

"He's a friend, you know, of the Oldenburys' friend Mr. Sayre."



"So far so good," Miss Frances summed up in rather a noncommittal tone.

"Look here, Aunt Fran! You know he doesn't—isn't—I don't—— Why! You know—of course! there's no reason why you should——"

"Oh, no, of course not!"

"Well, I believe I'll turn in now, Aunt Fran."

"All right. I'll sit here awhile longer."

Ellen went upstairs, seeing fireflies, feeling wet grass sprinkling her ankles with icy dew, and longing, almost with physical thirst, to be alone.

She still slept with Aunt Sallie. She found the door of their room shut, a thing that had never happened before, except when poor little Larkum, the old terrier, had been poisoned by an unknown hand and was dying, very slowly, in his basket by Aunt Sallie's chair.

She knocked, and heard a sound which she took to be "Come in." When she went in, her young aunt was scrambling off her knees by the side of the bed, where she had been saying her prayers. Mumbling something, she now hurried into bed, and turned far over toward the wall. When Ellen kissed her good-night, she said, in a colorless voice:

"How long did he stay?"

"Not very long, only a little while. I've been sitting out there talking to Aunt Fran. She's out there yet."

"Oh dear! Ellen!—Well, nothing. Good-night, dearie."

The diminutive of childhood almost let loose some tears waiting to be shed.

Nothing happened on Thursday to prevent the picnic.

Ellen had always very poor wind, climbing, and it was cruel to others to make them wait for her. This she knew very well; and yet she puffed and panted so tremendously that someone always had to wait. The rest of the party could safely neglect her this time, for of course it was up to her own young man, whom she had brought along herself, to push and pull her upward through the soft soaking loam and over the slippery, dripping rocks, as well as to carry her jacket and the absurd thimbleful of whisky she and Jim always took along on picnics to please their Aunt Frances. There was always a good deal of fun over the Grahams' whisky flasks, which were usually the brown glass bottles a hundred quinine pills had originally come in, and held by measurement two tablespoonfuls.

"Come on, fellows, have a drink apiece!" shouted Jim, waving his quinine pill bottle until the six or seven lunch-boxes he carried, slung together, knapsack fashion, over his shoulder, slipped down and precipitated several hard-boiled eggs and sandwiches on the ferny floor of the woods.

He scrambled them back, and led the way, with some unattached young men and ambitious girls, straight up the short-cut, "Timothy's Path," over the moss-bedded boulders and through the arching saplings and briery undergrowth that sprawled across it. Ellen inevitably fell back, little by little, from the rest, with a very warm and rosy face after the cross-meadow climb from the village. Mr. Tallman singled himself out deftly as the others scattered, and came and walked, as she had happily expected, beside her. They skirted the precipitous slanting ledge of Stratton Glen, and began to bite into the

real climb of the day. Though Ellen went up the treacherous path with desperate haste, afraid the others, in spite of her known short wind, would think she was lagging back on purpose to monopolize Mr. Tallman, she lost ground on them faster and faster. Most of all she was afraid Mr. Tallman himself would think she was lagging back on purpose; and every time this hideous probability came into her mind, she spurted ahead with more frantic haste, and ultimately less speed. At last things began to grow dizzy round her, and she had to lean against a tree, and even hold on with both arms round the trunk, for a moment.

"Hullo! What's the matter?"

Mr. Tallman hurried over to her through some tangled briars which tore a hole in one leg of his trousers. Taking no notice of this mishap, he repeated:

"What's the matter, Miss Graham? You're faint!"

"Oh no—I'm not. I only—haven't any—wind left—at all. I'll just rest—a minute. Then we'll go on."

"But why be so ambitious, Miss Graham? It's only half-past ten. Let's take half an hour, and have a good rest."

"Half an hour! They'd lose us completely."

"Well?"

"Why, we'd be *lost*!"

"Oh no. We've only to follow the stream up to the flag-pole, and then walk south along the ridge. Your kid brother told me exactly which way to go."

"Oh? Well, all right."

"I see you *can* be quite reasonable, Miss Graham."

He threw her jacket over a crumbling, corky log that lay by the edge of Mad Michael, the roaring stream that

lent such wild beauty to the climbing path, and she sat down on it, recovering her normal breath.

He sat down, too, and investigated the tear in his trouser leg. For a time Mad Michael made the only noise, rushing round small rocks as if it were Niagara, and their impudence in being there were unthinkable. There were some Canada violets still blooming up here, on long stems that had the whole summer in them. Mr. Tallman regarded these for some time with a pleased eye, and something more fine-grained and responsive in his look than usual. Presently he reached over and picked one, and said:

“ ‘Take the flower, and turn the hour.’ ”

Ellen knew that, and promptly answered:

“ ‘All the winds of Canada call the plowing-rain.’ ”

“You’re going backward. That’s the line before.”

“I know it. But I particularly like it.”

“So do I, for that matter. I’m fond of all kinds of homesick poetry. ’Tisn’t often Kipling writes it. It takes an Irishman to do it to the very top notch.”

“It takes an Irishman to do fairy poetry too. Did you ever read anything by Sir Samuel Ferguson?”

“I never even heard of him.”

“Never read his ‘Fairy Well of Lagnanay’ or his ‘Fairy Thorn’?”

“No, but I believe you mean to spout one or both of ’em to me. You’ve got a recitative glitter in your eye.”

“Can you endure being spouted to?”

“I’ll try.”

“ ‘Get up, our Anna dear, from the weary spinning-wheel,’ ” began Ellen at once. She repeated the whole poem of the “Fairy Thorn,” and Mr. Tallman said:

"All I can give you in return for that bewitched beauty is Kipling again. Let's hear what Kipling you know."

"I know 'The Seven Seas' pretty well."

"What! You haven't read 'Ballads and Barrack Room Ballads'? The Lord has delivered you into my hand, Miss Graham. This fairy thing of Sir Samuel What's-his-name's was a beauty, and no mistake: but I'll give you good measure for it. What shall I take? By the Lord, the 'Ballad of East and West.'"

"Hurry up, then!"

"'Kamal is out with twenty men to raise the border side,  
And he has lifted the Colonel's mare, that was the Colonel's pride.'"

On and on he went with the glittering galloping couplets, while Ellen's eyes shone and her breast heaved afresh.

"Do you know, it's not once in a dog's age I ever meet anybody that really likes poetry. I believe you're the only person that ever stayed at the Windward House that ever recited poetry up here on the mountain!"

"I'm only getting my breath to begin again."

"What's the next to be?"

"What would you like, out of 'The Seven Seas'?"

"'The Last Chantey.'"

"Well, that's even better than t'other."

He recited it with considerable fire: and when he had finished, he said:

"I want to spout another, by request of the spouter."

"Which?"

"The Envoi about the long trail, the out trail."

"I don't know that."

"Hooray! Now listen."

She thought he put just enough singsong into the beautiful monotony of the choruses: and when he came to the fast-thickening beauty of the last stanzas, they fairly pulled her up off the log, and made her stand, listening with a hundred ears.

When he had finished, she sat down again; but he looked at his watch and said:

"I suppose you're depending on me to tell you the half hour's up."

"Oh well! We'd better be off, then. But look! before we go—there's an accidental vista that shows the Old Street, and—I do believe—our very house!"

Through a miniature landslide that had left a peep-hole in the woods, they looked down on the incredibly tiny street meandering through the upper middle of the valley like a thread with white sea-shells irregularly strung on it—houses and barns. Further to the east, down by the river, Ellen's familiar eye could detect the Oldenbury farmhouse shining in the sun.

"You *have* got a lovely, dulcet, smiling country up here, Miss Graham."

"And to think of our all living in those midget houses!"

"Well, this is about where Kipling stands, and that valley is about where the rest of us poor devils live that are trying to learn to write," said he, as they started forward again. "Mis-ter Robinson! I believe I'd be ready to die if I'd written that 'Envoi,' and the 'Ballad of East and West.'"

They plodded forward up the wild banks of Mad Michael; and he told her something he had in mind about a coming poet, "being born today, perhaps!" who would

far outshine this great little spectacled poet of Bombay.

"It takes all my breath to climb," said Ellen, "so you can have a free floor, please."

"Here, let me help you up over this rock."

He did so, in unromantic fashion, spreading out those strong hands of his, which looked as if they knew well what manual labor was, over her shoulder-blades, and boosting her along very successfully.

"I can—walk alone—now, thanks. What's this new Milton of yours going to write about? Because I'm looking for a new poet, too."

"You are? Well, my Milton is going to write about labor and labor unions, mine-inspectors, rescue gangs, structural iron-workers, bridge-builders, steeple-jacks, electrical men, and steel men and all the likes of that. Especially strikers and all sorts of rebellious men."

"He'll make us excruciatingly sorry for them, I suppose, the hard, dangerous lives they lead——"

"Sorry! Not by a long chalk, Miss Graham. He'll make us admire them, and envy them, grimy Titans that they are. They make the fife and drum and sword look like amateur theatrical properties. They're the full-grown men of the world: they're the international armies: and their big strikes are the Iliad and Odyssey!"

"Won't your poet do anything to make peace between capital and labor?"

"I don't believe so. I hope not. I think perhaps he'll impartially celebrate 'em both. I can see, in my mind's eye, the covers of his books, with great scenes of labor stamped on them, miners swinging picks past charges of dynamite, and sky cowboys lassoing girders hundreds of feet up in the air."

"I see him too," said Ellen. "He's really just another Kipling, up to date, isn't he?"

"Hmm! Perhaps. I don't believe, though, I quite like your saying that."

"Well, do you know, I can foresee another kind of poet——"

"Oh yes, tell me about yours."

"—Or perhaps he's a novelist——"

"Isn't it about time we stopped to rest again, so you can do him justice?"

"We might, for a few minutes. Only I don't want to be so late for lunch that we find our peaches all gone."

"I cached some in my pocket. Here they are. Willets and Barnhaven's best."

"Oh, that *was* clever of you. It was genius, really, rather than talent."

While they ate the peaches, and drank from a collapsible cup, dipped in the ice-cold eddies, Ellen described her poet.

"This man is going to speak out for all those dumb, patient people that go on enduring and laboring and not questioning, until they die. He'll be the spokesman of the under dog, and the miners that don't strike. He'll make the colored people articulate, as a race, and the Jews and Chinese and Indians. In fact I shouldn't wonder if he'd be a colored man."

"He affects you like champagne, Miss Graham."

"Yes, he does. I really don't feel that I can wait much longer for him."

"Maybe, after all, your poet and mine aren't such miles and miles apart. What if it's one and the same man?"



"I don't see how he can be. You see yours is going to write about the strong, and the fighters; and mine is going to write about the weak."

"Well! I like mine best."

"Mine's the best Christian of the two, though."

"Still I like mine best. I shrewdly suspect yours is a woman."

"What I don't see is why, with your ideas, you're not contented with Kipling?"

"Why, just as you said here a while ago, I suppose. Because he isn't up to date. He's all for the soldier in mankind when he's got on his dress uniform, and has no use for him in the khaki of civil life, when he's doing the work of the world and feeding the useless, pretty soldier with a brass spoon."

"You think soldiers are useless?" asked Ellen, thinking of the twenty limping veterans who marched to the cemetery on Memorial Day.

"Mostly."

"So does Sue."

"Who's Sue?"

"Sue Redwood. Professor Redwood's daughter. She was at Radcliffe when I was. She's the greatest, finest, most of a woman——! There's simply nobody like her."

Mr. Tallman consulted his watch.

"Ought I to tell you what time it is? It's a quarter-past eleven."

"Oh! We must hurry on, then."

They made, however, a number of additional stops on the remaining way, which now lay along the ridge, and commanded a fifty-mile view. Once they found a lizard, and once saw a porcupine slide up a tree with his

quills brandished; and once a fawn stepped into their path and looked at them placidly.

"Another thing my poet will do," said Ellen, "is to make animals articulate. He'll sweep away a lot of gray-bearded old abuses by the simple process of describing them, in plain English, and giving a shrewd guess at the way the animal feels, festering in a steel trap, or being skinned alive, or hung up by a skewer in a slaughter-house, and scalded before it's dead."

"Not in this country, such things don't happen, surely!"

"Why of course they do, and I wish *I* could write about it."

"Then why don't you, Miss Graham?"

"I would if I could, heaven knows!"

"I repeat, why don't you?"

"If it's so easy, why don't you write yourself about the structural iron-workers, and the sky cowboys, then?"

"Great Scott! Miss Graham, *I* can't write! I've got to earn a living. That's why I'm on *McQuaid's*."

"I thought editors always wrote, for their own magazines, and on the side, too, more or less."

"Less, I guess—the younger ones. Oh, of course, I've got my dream. Who hasn't? Look here! How would this do, Miss Graham, for a motto for both of us? 'Every man his own poet'?"

## CHAPTER XIV

### DOWN THE VALLEY

SCARCELY was Ellen inside the house on her return from the picnic when Aunt Fran, bursting with the news, told her that Julia Oldenbury was engaged to Webster Willets.

Celia and Romeo had driven up and told Aunt Fran. They were not altogether pleased, and yet, Ellen gathered, they scarcely thought Webster as stone-age and cave-dwelling a young man as she did.

A week ago, how this news would have reverberated and echoed in her mind! Now she could barely dwell on it long enough to satisfy the immediate cravings of her aunt, who had been keeping it bottled up half a day to tell her. Julia's affairs seemed pale, and had only a languid interest for her beside the incessant re-dramatization of the events and conversation of that day, which kept enacting themselves before her eyes and talking in her ears. Youth in her, for this time, would be served, and put all other comers temporarily aside. At tea she had to pretend to a far greater interest than she felt. She laboriously feigned to be unable to think of anything else but Julia's engagement; but all the time only half heard what Aunt Fran was telling about Celia and Romeo, and what they said; and how this explained Julia's not going on the picnic. Faint irritation even

stirred at the bottom of everything else in her heart, to think that Julia and Webster—Webster Willets!—should interrupt her golden days and nights with the unwelcome news of their betrothal.

It was like a wagon jolting over cobblestones in front of a hall where a concert is taking place.—Still she did think a little about it when she was going to bed that night. She wondered if she ought to have said more to Julia about it away back in the Christmas holidays. But perhaps they would be happy, perhaps they would together carve out a life for themselves well worth living. Julia with her poetry, Webster with his frontiersman look and spirit;—it might be a marriage builded better by nature, (or by God, perhaps) than anybody knew.

Something kept her, when on the next evening Mr. Tallman came to make an appointment for a walk on Saturday, from saying anything to him about Julia's engagement. It might be a moot point whether she remembered it.

They were going to walk on Saturday afternoon. On Saturday it rained, however; one of those cold, fresh, autumn-boding August rains, when the mountain summer seems to leap ahead toward its end. At the hour appointed for the walk Mr. Tallman came and proposed that they should "sit it out." There was a corner of the piazza not reached by the gusty showers. They sat down, accordingly, in the inmost angle between the ell and front piazzas, where the soaked and tingling air of the washed earth surrounded them, without the blasts of icy showers that blew across the lawn so furiously.

"My week in Tory Hill is about over," said Franklin Tallman. "I thought it was going to be quite a long

holiday; but, well! By the way, Miss Graham, didn't you say you had some verses upstairs? Don't you feel in the mood of bringing them down and letting me see or hear a few of them?"

"At last you've asked for them! I've been hoping you would, for days. I sorted them over the other day, after you'd put it into my head, and picked out about a dozen to show you. Oh dear! how it does bring back the time I went to see Professor Redwood!"

("Now, this is a curious thing," she thought, as she went into the house to get the package. "All the time I was sorting over those verses, I *thought* I was looking for the ones *McQuaid's* might conceivably take, with an eye to helping Jim through college; and all the time I was really thinking which ones would please this strange man, that I never saw till less than a week ago; and what opinion they'd give him of me.")

"May I look 'em over right here and now?" he inquired, on her return.

She took the rubber band off the packet and handed it to him open; leaning forward a little from her chair to watch his expression.

"'Four Roads Out of Emberdale.' I hope this piece comes up to its name."

He read it twice, and then said:

"'Tisn't quite spontaneous. Let's see—let's see what there is here, a little less elaborate." He glanced through the remaining manuscripts and singled out one.

"Which is that you're reading now?" asked Ellen.

"One called 'Alexandra.'"

"Oh! That's a portrait."

"Of anybody I've met up here?"

"No—of somebody in Nantucket. Sue Redwood. I spoke to you about her the other day, on the picnic, and you said our time for resting was over, and we'd better go on."

"I suspect this piece would read better aloud," he said, regarding her rather intently. "You've cramped that small print of yours a good deal, to squeeze in all the stanzas on one page."

"You'd like *me* to read it aloud?"

"Yes, please. But you can't see very well there, I'm afraid. Would you mind coming and sitting over here?" He rubbed off the chair he had indicated, with his handkerchief, and she suddenly remembered how at school boys had dusted off chairs for girls they had liked, and she had never thought much about it one way or another.

She read aloud those seven stanzas in which she had tried, with so full a heart, to picture the comely health, the lucid mind, the brightly-burning spirit of her friend; and most of all, how

"Robust and tender  
Is her home-grown feeling;  
Swift her espousal of the hindmost's part:  
Instinct her free faith,  
And her loyal valor;  
Native to her west-born, fellow-caring heart."

When she had finished, with a little difficulty toward the last, because she never could read aloud anything at all intimate, without some tremor of emotion in her voice, she looked up and waited for a comment. At length he said:

"It was lovely, Miss Graham. It was just what I expected."

"Well! I'm glad you liked it."

"I mean the sweet and darling tremble in your voice."

There was a considerable silence, which he left it to Ellen to terminate. She did so finally by saying:

"Sue is different from everybody else. I could never write verses, not in a thousand years, that would come anywhere near her."

Mr. Tallman rather coolly said:

"I wonder what she's *really* like—seen through other people's eyes than yours, I mean."

"Ask anybody down at Radcliffe."

"Oh, Miss Graham! That sort of heroine only grows in novels, and not very good novels."

"Your theory is perfectly right. The only trouble with it is that the facts in this case won't accommodate themselves. You see Sue Redwood *really is* that kind of a heroine."

"Come, come, Miss Graham!"

"I don't know whether you're trying to be offensive, or what, Mr. Tallman!"

"Well—what does she *do*, for instance?"

"She plays the violin, and answers her father's letters, and looks after her mother, who has curvature of the spine; and she arranges the concerts at the Italian Settlement, and gives out literature at suffrage meetings, and goes with delegations to the Governor, and sometimes acts as a probation officer, and helps collate statistics for the Child Labor Committee——"

"Help! I'm drowning!"

"And all the time she's studying at Radcliffe, and having lonesome girls come in for tea on Sunday nights, and being—Oh! being a lantern to other people's feet, and a Sursum Corda to their spirits."

("There!" said Franklin Tallman triumphantly to himself. "There it is again, that perfectly delicious tremble in her voice. I thought I could provoke it if I tried hard enough, along that line. Wonder if I could play on it again?")

Aloud he said:

"Oh yes, I suppose she's beautiful, rich, clever, innocent——"

"Not beautiful," said Ellen. "She *looks* beautiful at times, but she isn't, really. Rich, not at all, of course. And as for innocent! Why, she knows everything."

"I really egged you on, Miss Graham, to get a rise, of sorts, out of you. I've no doubt Miss Redwood's quite a paragon." He took a very restful attitude. "The little I've seen of you, Miss Graham, makes me believe you're moderately truthful. I don't think, if I were a judge, I'd require you to take an oath."

The rain had stopped, the wind had fallen, and a most lovely evening light began to shine over the whole drenched valley. The sun had sunk, but "drew water" in a thin misty shaft, straight up the avalanche paths of Windward Mountain.

"Up here in these dulcet mountains of yours you don't really see any suffering, do you?"

"No suffering! What a Windward House view you take of the country, Mr. Tallman!"

"Well, I stick to it. Compared, I mean, to the north end of Boston, for example, and east of Second Avenue in New York."

"Our death rate is higher than some cities."

"Well, but——"

"The first thing I saw was a horse with a broken



hip, that had been driven twenty miles. Since then——  
O me!"

"Man or beast, are you thinking of, Miss Graham?"

"Oh, both, both, both! In city and country, winter and summer, he that hath eyes to see, let him see the under dog—the corpus vilis of the poor!"

This was a deeper tremor in her voice than that he had so laboriously evoked a little while before. It was so deep and beautiful that for a moment he was sure that what he felt with her and for her was the one authentic passion.

"I hope my poet will hurry up and be born," said she.

"I hope he will: and I hope he will be you, Miss Graham."

Times were beginning to occur when it seemed almost probable that she would be her own poet. But when she came to her desk it would be gone, the confident warmth and eagerness. Yet every return of the confident mood carried her judgment temporarily with it. It came on tonight, when she lay awake out of sheer flood-tide happiness, looking out the dim window, and feeling the soft heave of her aunt's sleeping breath beside her. Often she had heard of people lying awake with anxiety and sorrow and care and remorse: never because of a solemn bliss like this, rising and flooding over one. Every hour and half-hour struck clearly from the big clock in the dining-room: and every one of the thirty minutes in between was tasted freshly as it passed: every minute burst, like Joy's grape in the poem "against her palate fine." She thought of the stars dancing in their courses, slowly dancing a stately dance, like a sky minuet. It was a white and glittering night. She did not so much as grow drowsy

all night long. When the sun came up, at about five in the morning, over the round shoulder of Hemlock Mountain, and poured in ladlefuls of light through the slats of the shutters, she was a thousand times more rested than if she had been asleep. But it was Sunday, the late-lying morning. Splashing and opening and shutting bureau drawers would wake up her aunt. It was immaterial whether one rose and dressed in a flood of happiness, or lay still in a flood of it.

Mountain lightning on one of these same August nights was never more sudden than the troubling thought that at this moment darted into her mind. It shot out at her from the picture of Julia on the bracket on the wall over the whatnot. The slats of sunshine had picked out Julia's faintly colored tintype to illuminate. One bar of it shone full across her beautiful red hair, and another on her wonderful peach-rose complexion, leaving in shadow her soft eyes. The tintype man had colored it hastily, but its loveliness had somehow survived him, and to anybody who knew by heart Julia's beautiful coloring, the dash of pink in each cheek and the wash of crimson over the hair were enough to reconstruct the whole arrangement of light and color in that fixed, tender face.

If Franklin Tallman should once see Julia Oldenbury, he would save her forever from Webster Willets. He would not care again to sit on the Mowbrays' piazza with Ellen, and call her voice "sweet and darling."

And if Julia ever came to know the thoughtfulness, the tempered manliness, the strength and sense of Franklin Tallman's mind, she would not marry, she could not love, a cave-man.

This was the forked lightning that struck out of Julia's picture into the very bull's-eye of Ellen's heart.

Julia never came up to the Old Street on Sundays. Mr. Tallman was leaving on the Sunday evening flyer.

It was of little use trying so studiously to avoid the notion that if she and Mr. Tallman took their belated walk that day they might go down the valley and call on Julia.

Julia might be out with Webster. There was no telephone at Wakerobin, and none, either, at the Oldenbury farm.

Or she might be at home, and Webster with her; and they might be very much annoyed at callers coming.

All this, she reflected, was a good deal like her having tried to think the tarantula would have run out of the pasture before she could go back to scrunch it. It was like Jim's nurse telling her to forget the tubercular brothers in the garbage street. It was the Mrs. Partington of the soul. This element of scorn having once come in, it was only a question of time when the self-beyond-self, so much more arrogant in these days, would have its way. There was a Rubicon crossed somewhere between five and six o'clock. Once on the far side of it, she found pride enlisted, with all its banners. She cared so much about her happiness that she would risk it all. It was worth the greatest stakes she could hazard. Great texts of Scripture came into her mind, far beyond her present need, or any common need, yet fitted, by their very hyperbole, to rouse and sustain her: "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life . . . shall keep it unto life

eternal." "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out." With more sense of humor, Ellen would not have had the sublime egotism to appropriate such mighty words to her small uses. But perhaps those mighty texts were meant for idealistic young egoists.

In half an hour more she got up, washed, brushed, dressed, and went downstairs to skim the cream for breakfast, and air the house. The sun that was shining in on her conscience was a rather watery, wintry sun, though a very wholesome, sanitary one. But out of doors, after the gusty storm, it was the perfection of mountain summer weather. There was a look of velvet depth in the folds of Windward and Hemlock Mountains, into which the sunbeams out of the blue and white sky seemed to burrow like bees. It would have been strange if Franklin Tallman, on such a morning, had not strolled down before church (in white flannel trousers of cheap quality and poor fit, but of proper dazzling freshness) and asked for the belated walk they should have had yesterday.

Perhaps he wondered why Ellen, in consenting, had had a certain squareness and setness in her face. She had not looked quite so nice today as she had yesterday, he reflected, being in a musing mood, as he walked down from the Windward House to Wakerobin at the appointed hour that afternoon. Yesterday the dampness had made the short hairs round her temples curl up a little. In cloudy weather the pupils of light-colored eyes grow larger.—She had a sprinkling of freckles over the cheekbones, scattering down toward the chin. The end of her short nose was well sprinkled with freckles. She wasn't really pretty anyway.—There had been rather a

nice look about her eyes that morning, though, chilly as they were. It was a sort of soldierly look.

She wasn't going to be forgotten very soon, he said to himself, with a sudden warm feeling of tenderness. She would be a fine, straight, simple-hearted comrade for some man. She would wear well, very well. She looked constant; she looked equal to weathering dull days. It had been a pleasant week, a very pleasant week. Very, indeed. Next week looked rather blank, by comparison. What sort of letter would she write, he wondered?

Falling in love began sometimes rather tentatively, of course. It wasn't always a plunge, head on, over the falls. It was getting a little difficult to keep their talk quite purely companionable and friendly. It kindled a little too warm, this last day or two. A little too warm, if it were not going to be—— That was a sort of break he had made on Saturday afternoon. What business had he to call her voice sweet and darling?

If, on the other hand, this were the tentative kind, the slowly rooting passion, how greatly worth while had been the wild-geese chase after a new verse-writer for *McQuaid's Magazine*! By the time he reached Wake-robin, Franklin Tallman distinctly saw Ellen Graham with a baby of his and hers in her arms.

"Which way are we going, Miss Graham?"

"Down the valley road to the Oldenbury farm."

"Where once the pilgrim cattle stood  
In fragrant clover to the knee?"

he quoted her own verses.

"Do you know, it *was* the valley road and the Oldenbury farm I was thinking of when I wrote 'Atlantis'?"

"So you're taking me down there to illustrate your poem for me?"

Ellen's face sobered.

"No, I'm taking you down there to see Julia Oldenbury. She's a great friend of mine."

"Oh! Then the one you wrote about in that rather fine thing you read me yesterday isn't your only great friend?"

"No indeed. Julia's a good deal older friend of mine than Sue. I've known Julia ever since we were the smallest kind of fry. We went to school together, and wrote verses all over our books. Now she's——"

She stopped. There seemed something so treacherous to Webster in this visit, she could not bring herself to go on and mention the engagement. But then, Webster had never been able to make her feel toward him as one human being toward another.

And though the expedition had been undertaken for the purpose of throwing herself to the lions, a notion kept obtruding upon her that she was merely being extremely absurd. So mingled a state of mind she had never felt before. Fear and exaltation were inextricably intertwined with a sense of ridiculousness. The ground really under her in the whole affair was probably a lingering remnant of common sense, perpetually reminding her, in caverns of the subconscious mind, that nothing at all, probably, would come of the great venture; that it was a mere mystical act, a sort of quixotic act of faith. There was undoubtedly a certain element of the theatrical about it. And yet there was also much more. Prizes and pearls of great happiness always seemed to Ellen like fairy jewels; one false step and they would wither away,

There was with her always, too, the old cowardly yet would-be-brave longing to leap off the cliff like Perseus, and try if Pallas Athené had not fastened the wings to the sandals.

“What makes you so quiet, Miss Graham?”

“Why—I’m listening to you. Don’t people always say a person’s greatest accomplishment is to be a good listener?”

“But if you’ll excuse me, you’re not a good listener today. Here I’m telling you about my boyhood, and you’re looking the other way, with the most preoccupied look on your face I’ve ever seen in all the years I’ve known you.”

“Please go on telling.”

“You’re thinking what to say to Julia Waterbury, or whatever her name is, to explain why you brought a poor, homely, stupid fellow down to see her.”

“What a perfect mind-reader!”

“Well, I wouldn’t worry. Perhaps Julia Waterbury’ll be out. It’s better to be born lucky than handsome.”

This vein of mild frolicsomeness continued until they had dipped into the deepest part of the valley, and the sudden wildness of the river bottom reminded him afresh of his Maine home. He began then to tell about his father, small and grizzled, driving over a radius of fifteen miles of wood, lake, and river country to see his scattered patients: getting paid sometimes in cabbages, sometimes in butternuts, having his work undone by traveling charlatans and patent medicines, having to invent and manufacture all sorts of braces and splints, on the spur of the moment, for all sorts of unheard-of accidents.

“And my mother trims her little old black bonnets over

and over and over again," he told her, "like a minister's wife in a short story. Her bonnets are black because my brother Henry died, a good many years ago. She always keeps a pansy or two in a teacup in front of a queer little picture of Henry and me together, holding hands, in the funniest little plaid knickerbockers and velveteen jackets you ever saw! They originally belonged to father and my Uncle Tom. Mother cut 'em down."

Either from walking faster, or from interest, Ellen's fruity color had come up; and all her conflicting thoughts were being submerged deeper and deeper by the tide of inconsequent happiness the isolated companionship was pouring over her.

She said:

"I see your mother! She has one of those pretty mouths, the least bit concave, and ruffled the least little bit round the edges."

"That's not altogether a bad guess."

"Bonnets become her, probably."

"They do. She's got one of those round, tiable faces."

He was silent for a moment or two, and then said:

"You see, Miss Graham, I haven't a single drop of blue blood in my whole body—no, not even to conciliate that pretty Aunt Sallie of yours, that can't bear the sight of me."

Ellen looked at her man, and all her heart rose triumphing.

They were at the Oldenbury gate; the old gate she had swung on in her childhood. They went in through the hollyhocks and the bee-balm to the side door. Their knock echoed and was still. Through the sitting-room windows they saw a cat stretched in luxurious abandon



on the sofa. No footsteps sounded within; there was no sound but the faintest tinkle of a cow-bell away off in the fields.

"They're all away," said Ellen at last. She was almost afraid to feel such a fierce joy and triumph burning in her heart as this. They stood still for a moment or two more, in the level four-o'clock light pouring down across the fields. You could look deep into the sugar-bush by this light: you could see far into the brown dusk within. Then they turned back through the bee-balm and hollyhocks toward the gate again and Ellen tried to hide and smother the leaping, shouting joy in her heart.

As they turned into the road there was a clatter in the covered bridge below, on the Tewkesbury road, and emerging from the bridge's hood, with spanking clatter of hoofs and buggy wheels, Ellen saw Sue Redwood and a young man, driving up toward the Old Street.

"Why, there she is now!" called a high and sweet voice out of the buggy. There was a gray glove waving, and a white dress vaulting out over the wheel, and escaping without a single fleck of mud in doing so.

"We were driving up to see you——"

"Where did you come from?"

"—Going to surprise you——"

"How long have you been here?"

"Last night—to stay a week—surprised Aunt Jane!"

"Well, Mr. Tallman, *this* is Sue. Miss Redwood, Mr. Tallman."

"Miss Graham—Mr. Micantoni."

Mr. Micantoni was a young man of very comely and well-proportioned figure, with a head that made Ellen

think of the portraits of Burns. He held it in much the same position, and his dark, thick, longish locks were brushed straight forward in the same manner.

"Oh!" she remembered. "Sue mentioned this man in one of her letters. He plays the violin, I remember."

"Now, Ellen," cried Sue, "what shall we do? Here are two of us afoot, and two a-buggy. Who says to let the bars down and unhitch old Mouse here, and tie her to the fence, under that big tree, in the Oldenbury meadow; and all walk up together, and have supper with you, Ellen, and Mr. Micantoni and I'll walk back by moonlight and drive Mouse home from here?"

This plan suited all hands. Mr. Micantoni looked toward Sue, and his glance crossed Mr. Tallman's traveling the same way; and something took fire, and was instantly extinguished. Sue ran and began letting down the bars into the field, and the young men unhitched the mouse-colored mare and led her through into the shady deep turf of the meadow. They pushed the old yellow-wheeled buggy into a thicket of wayside bushes. Then they all set off up the road to the Old Street. Sometimes Sue walked with Ellen. She told her about Mr. Micantoni; how his father was Professor of Dante at the University of Rome, and he had come to this country three years ago to study engineering, but was likely to give that up, for scientific writing.

"He plays the violin, and so do you," said Ellen musingly.

Sometimes Ellen walked with Mr. Micantoni, and found that what little he had to say to her was said very modestly and intelligently in very good colloquial English indeed: only the dwelling pause on the liquids, and a

rolling rhythm of accent, would have let anybody know that he was Italian.

And sometimes each girl walked with her own man, and those were the longest divisions of road and time. They could almost see their own shadows stretching longer and longer beside them in the wayside grass. The blueness of late summer was all along the northern mountains; the thick slice of hazy distance at the upper end of the valley where Bald and Mother Mountains closed in toward each other, was the color of the bloom on blueberries.

Mr. Tallman told Ellen more about his life. He would talk for a while, and then be silent for a while. He told her he had caught her silent fit of an hour or two ago.—He had partly worked his way through college, and then won a scholarship. He was trying now to get his sisters educated. He had three younger sisters, and he had no idea that there was any more need of a higher education for him than for them.

Ellen said:

“Do you know at first I thought you must be quite well-to-do, to be staying at the Windward House?”

“Oh, *McQuaid's* sent me there. At least, they want an article on typical summer hotels, and this is on the Boomerang Automobile Road, you know. I combined things. I have to spend next Sunday at a Long Island seaside hotel.” He was silent again for a little while, and then added:

“And to have to write it as if you cared! Think you could write to order, like that, Miss Graham?”

“I think I couldn't make a living at all, by any form of writing!”

"I think I see you writing an article on summer hotels, Miss Graham."

Ellen, in sudden earnestness, laid her hand on his sleeve.

"Oh, you little know, Mr. Tallman,—there's nothing fine about me at all! I'm one of those sheltered women—parasites—other women call us so, and I think they're right. My father supports me, I don't earn my own way in the world. Who am I to have business or professional ideals? And besides, there's something else——"

"Well?" he prompted at length, she stood still so long, looking so earnest.

"Well, you said something the other day about my being truthful;—I can't let you think for a minute that I'm a very white, crystal person! I don't know whether you do, except that men do assume that any girl in a clean dress, with a clear complexion, is just the same inside——"

She stopped and looked at him, baffled and troubled by his laughing expression.

"You think these things I'm speaking of are childish, but they're *not!* They're *not!*"

"No?"

"Oh no! We're not like that, like lilies. At least I'm not. I have such base thoughts, *more* than *thoughts!* You *must* understand, Mr. Tallman! *Do* you understand?"

She shook his sleeve where she had caught hold of it.

"I understand that you're a very bad lot, Miss Graham."

"Oh, you *don't* understand, and you don't believe me."

"Yes, indeed, I do. I understand," he answered more seriously.

He shifted her jacket from one arm to the other, as he spoke.

"I think I understand; and if I didn't feel before that you were pretty white all through, I surely feel so now, Miss Graham."

As they crossed the old red bridge over the Ballantyne, he lifted up her jacket-sleeve where it hung over his arm, and kissed it.

When they got back to Wakerobin, the aunts had the tea-table on the piazza, and had bread and butter, poached eggs and blackberries and cream set out on it, but only for five. To make places for seven, all the young people crowded into the little pantry, and bore out, with mock ceremonial of bows and scrapes, with napkins, waiter-like, over their arms, fresh slices of bread and pats of butter, and another basket of blackberries to hull. Sue and Ellen hulled them, while the three young men whistled and sang, all sitting on the piazza steps.

It was sweet and pleasant, it was unforgettable, but it came to an end. The stage for the evening flyer came and stopped at the door, with Franklin Tallman's suitcase already on board. He said good-by to the aunts and Jim and Mr. Micantoni, and last to Sue and Ellen. He shook Sue's hand, and then almost flung it away from him, in the middle of her gay and cordial farewell; but Ellen's he let go gently, as if he were laying it down, with almost the gesture with which he had laid the sleeve of her jacket over his arm again after he had kissed it.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE WANING

"SUE! Come up soon! I must have you to talk to."

"So must I have you!"

Thus Ellen had parted with her friend on that Sunday evening: and on Tuesday morning Sue drove the mouse-colored mare up from Tewkesbury to spend the whole day. In the interim Ellen had felt, as often before, a fairly physical thirst for the sense and judgment of her more than sister. She was finding it a necessity nowadays to consult Sue in every intellectual and emotional emergency. What had begun at college as an obscure instinct was ripening into a settled custom, which might have been condensed into a proverb:

"What is worth thinking over at all is worth consulting Sue Redwood about."

They had gone down to the river, and were sitting by the abandoned mill-race, looking into the golden-brown water as they talked. And these were fragments of their talk, or rather of Ellen's talk and Sue's musing comments and promptings.

"But I don't think there's enough unselfishness in my feeling, Sue. I don't have any of that maternal feeling people tell about. I know perfectly well what it is; I've had it for years about Jim: ever since he had pneumonia, in fact. I hate, even yet, to have him go off on these

golf matches without an umbrella, and I'm always sneaking down and looking in his room to see if he's taken his coat. It frets me for days if he gets caught in the rain."

"Let me ask you something else, Ellen. When you think of this man, do you ever think of his being very hot and dusty and tired and cross? And will he stand the strain?"

"I haven't thought of it; but wait, I will!"

After sitting sober and silent for a time, she answered confidently:

"Yes, he stands that strain."

. . . . .

"Sometimes, Sue, I think of a line in Clough's 'Mari Magno,' where the bride and groom go off in a boat, and the old friend sees

"'Emilia closing to his side.'

And that makes me think of an old white farmhouse with big maple trees in front of it, when people that have been to tea there—with us—are going away at the end of the evening, all calling back 'Good-night!' as they go down the road: and we two slowly walk back into our house, and are all alone there together."

. . . . .

"And I'll tell you, Sue,—something else—I think of our sitting by a student-lamp in the evenings, talking over different ways of making our lives more American, more democratic, more uncluttered, and cleaner, and harder, and more and more beautiful and energetic."

"Oh, Ellen! I do love your way of thinking of things!"

"But, you see, I haven't got that *maternal* feeling at all."

"I think, my dear, you'd have it fast enough if he were ill, or hurt, or in any kind of trouble."

"I don't know. For while I do feel that way about Jim, and often about father, and Aunt Sallie, for instance, when she gets that worried look in her eyes, I don't need to have them right here in the house with me! I only need to know they're happy and well."

"Of course."

"Whereas with him it's so different. All I really want is to have him near me. I don't look at things through his eyes at all. I don't even think about his happiness. All I want is to have him near, and loving me. I really think that's my idea of heaven."

"I should think that little bit might do, to begin with."

"Sometimes I think of our being shipwrecked, and I imagine us drowning together, and it seems perfectly all right and nice."

"I guess I understand."

"Sue, what do you think about marriage in heaven?"

"Why, I never think of celibacy up there."

"Neither do I."

• • • • •  
"Does it frighten you, Ellen, to think of having a child?"

"No—oh no! Or do you mean, am I afraid of the pain?"

"Partly that, and partly whether you find yourself liking the thought of it."



"Why, I love the thought of it. But I *am* afraid of the pain and the danger. I was always a desperate coward. And by the way, Sue, do you take any stock in this idea that moral courage, so-called, is more difficult than physical? I don't. I never did, in fact. Who wouldn't rather be hissed and hooted at and stood in the pillory, than burned at the stake? I'm sure *I* can stand ridicule, if I need to: it only gets my dander up: but, oh! I'm afraid I would deny Jesus to save my worthless body a little pain."

"Well, Ellen, the sun's going down. And I'm convinced you *do* love this nice Mr. Tallman, for better, for worse."

"I guess I do, Sue."

They set off homeward across the stubbled fields, walking rather schoolgirlishly, arm in arm. Ellen spoke a little, as if for decency's sake, of Mr. Micantoni, and of Julia's engagement, not telling about her heroic fiasco of Sunday afternoon. But soon she was back again on the subject of her heart.

"Think, Sue, ten days ago I'd never seen him! Do you know, when I was a little girl, I used to have a perfectly beautiful feeling, once in a while, that I used to call the blue sky. When I grew up it dwindled away: but what was the blue sky to this?"

. . . . .

"Don't you ever think, too, that if the twenties go so far ahead of the teens, maybe there's something stored up in the thirties that's just as far ahead of the twenties? And in the forties, just as far ahead of the thirties? Of course I can't possibly imagine anything better than

this. As I say, it's simply my idea of heaven, to have it, and to know, of course, that everybody else has it too."

"It does make the English language seem poor, doesn't it?"

"Yes. There's a very small vocabulary of words to describe happiness."

"That's where musicians are lucky. They can describe it."

"Writers can do better than painters, at any rate."

They had climbed the last fence, and were back in the Old Street, when Sue said:

"My dear, do you know why I could listen to you so well, and give you such excellent advice? Because I've been in love much longer than you have!"

"Sue! Is it Mr. Micantoni?"

"Yes! And Ellen——"

"What?"

"We're engaged."

"But *when*?"

"Since Sunday evening."

"On the way home from our house?"

Sue nodded.

"God bless you, Sue. How happy we both are!"

They kissed each other.

"But how could you let me be talking all day long about *my* man?"

"Oh well! Perhaps because it made me think of mine."

"Well, Sue! There's a line in Hazlitt somewhere, about counting your life by lusters."

"It's in 'Reading Old Books,' I believe."

"Everything anybody's ever said seems so faded, though, somehow, doesn't it?"

"Except, as I said, music."

Sue went back to Nantucket when her week's visit with her Great-aunt Jane was over; and Ellen relapsed into that mooning solitude which persons in love enjoy so much; that fruitful-feeling idleness, which must be to the fields of the spirit what Indian summer, with its dreaming suns and moons, is to the fields of earth. This was the end of the season among the summer cottagers and at the Windward House. Old friends of the aunts, descendants of old Tory Hill families, who had emigrated a generation earlier to the West and South, used often to come at this season; and there were afternoon teas and whist parties for them at Wakerobin. They in turn used to ask the Wakerobin family to dine at the Windward House, especially on hop nights. Ellen always went. It did not occur to her to decline invitations unless (as never happened) she were ill. Putting on her black low-necked dress with a sprig of sweet clover or goldenrod stuck in the bosom, and her string of gold beads round her neck, she would go up to the Windward House parlor and take her mooning thoughts along with her. On warm September evenings the party would often sit on the long pillared piazzas of the hotel, while the reduced orchestra played waltzes and two-steps in the ballroom to the diminishing guests. Early in these evenings Jim would carry off whatever young girl beside his sister was in the party, to the ballroom within, and would be seen no more. Then the evening wind would rise, and swing the hanging electric lanterns between the tall pil-

lars of the piazza; and the tops of the maples would swish, and their heavily leaved branches would lap-lap against each other like waves on a beach. Indolent, refreshing, these evenings called "social," but in reality of essential solitude, succeeded each other several times a week throughout that pleasant September; seeming fruitful: not immediately fruitful of anything but pensive pleasure;—due partly, no doubt, like all her blisses, to mere exuberance of health.

She was not writing anything at all. Actual rust gathered on her pen. The one pigeon-hole of her desk which was looked into from time to time was that sparsely occupied with Franklin Tallman's letters. They had not been either frequent or very long. But they had sufficed. In October they grew fewer. There was also about them a dryer sort of tone. The signatures had changed. Instead of the humorous variety of the earlier ones, came now uniformly, "Yours sincerely."

Ellen's letters were prompter and longer than his. And into them went all the fancy and all the humor of her not very humorous nature, with all the poetry which could conform itself to a letter which was to be read by cooling eyes. Thrice intensified now, her old habit of looking at things through other people's eyes made her write and rewrite her letters to him with far more pains than she had ever bestowed on a manuscript. From the vantage of October, looking back, she realized that it had been almost as soon as he had gone away that she had begun to write her letters for a presumably critical, cool reader. And yet, at first, all such fears, sadnesses, and timidities had been easily dispelled, especially in those solitary, unoccupied evenings at the Windward House,

when the wind so pleasantly lapped and swished the trees. Then one had only to remember his deep voice calling *her* voice "sweet and darling," or that Sunday walk, when they had stopped on the old red bridge; and he was back beside her, in secret bliss.

The aunts were welcome to divine her affairs, if only they would never speak, or make her speak, of them. Aunt Sallie never did. She only looked wistfully puzzled sometimes, as if she were saying to herself, "I didn't want the other thing, and yet I surely don't want *this!*" Aunt Sallie seemed to divine more than Aunt Fran. Aunt Fran called Ellen upstairs one night, when she had been sitting out on the piazza, wrapped in a big cape, all alone, very late. Aunt Fran was in bed, with her bright Italian blanket pulled up over her knees, making her brilliant dark face yet darker and more brilliant. She called Ellen to her bedside and asked, without any warning, if Ellen had anything to tell her. Ellen said:

"Mercy no, Aunt Fran!"

"Well, all right. I saw one of those gray envelopes in the mail this morning, I thought."

"Put it out of your mind, do, please, Aunt Fran. There's really nothing in it—nothing but friendship."

The overworked word did sound very lame, she admitted to herself as soon as she heard herself say it.

"Tell that to the marines. You may call it a flirtation, if you like."

"All right, I will," said Ellen with relief. "We'll call it a flirtation."

"I really liked the young man very well," the older woman continued thoughtfully. "I liked him much bet-

ter than your Aunt Sarah did. I thought, Ellen, he was a good deal of a man."

It was not fortunate to be of a complexion and temperament that showed eager, pitiful pleasure quite so transparently.

Her aunt, without seeming to notice anything, added shrewdly:

"To tell the truth, Ellen, I never supposed you had very much of the flirt in you."

"Don't speak so discouragingly, Aunt Fran! It's never too late to learn."

"Your Aunt Sarah and I have always had men friends. Now your mother never did. She was a little starched, we used to tell her. She was rather prim. In fact young men were rather afraid of her. She never had any beaux at all, so far as any of us knew, until she met your father and married him. I've sometimes thought it would be the same way with you."

"Dear Aunt Fran! Now they're both worried about me," Ellen thought perplexedly to herself, as she slowly undressed. "Why can't I go and confide in both of them? They've surely been mothers to me. Why can't I go and talk it all over with them?" But after staring at herself for a long while in the glass over her bureau, she ended dully, "I can't. Perhaps, after years and years and years, I could."

Sue wrote that she was to be married late in October or early in November. Would Ellen be bridesmaid, along with Mr. Micantoni's sister? She would have but two. This letter came on a bright, breezy day, and the brightness and the breeze seemed to accentuate unkindly the

faint chill of desolation that hung nowadays about the word "wedding."

It was at about this time that the *Sunday Censor* regularly had a page of "Views and Reviews," with three or four pictures of magazine and newspaper editors scattered among the paragraphs giving their opinions on various questions of the hour. On this page Ellen found, one Sunday in October, a picture of Franklin Tallman, "assistant editor of *McQuaid's*." A wretched likeness it was, giving his somewhat thin face a physically delicate look that did not belong to it, and doing anything but justice to his deep-set dark eyes. There was an abrasion in the paper, too, which gave the effect of a scar or welt on his cheek. In spite of these disadvantages, however, there was a look of quietness, firmness, and self-confidence about it, which anyone would have recognized. The whimsical twist of his lips, too, was there, and that rather distinguished, half-Hebrew look. Ellen cut it out and put it in a silver frame she had. This frame was made to hang on the wall rather than to stand, like an easel, on a bureau or table. She hung it, accordingly, over a calendar she had hanging beside her bed. On the first evening she had it there, she consulted the calendar to get the distance to Sue's wedding; and as she felt again the dreary reverberation of the word "wedding" in her mind, she took the picture down and looked at it searchingly for some time. Before she put it back she kissed it. On the next night she took occasion to kiss it again: and after that throughout the autumn she kissed it more regularly than she wound her clock.

It was curious how kissing the picture seemed to relieve the staring dreariness that was gathering round her.

It seemed to open a door, and let her out into a sort of garden. Only the garden was growing darker. Every night when she kissed the picture and went out into the garden, there were some more of the flowers that she could no longer see. This slow darkening and clouding of her life was punctuated by two dreams. One came early in the autumn, before Sue's wedding, and one a long time later. In the first, she dreamed that Franklin Tallman took a locket off his watch-chain and put it in her hands. She struggled for a long time with the clasp of it; and when she opened it, there was Sue Redwood's picture in it. In the other dream she met him walking with another woman, but this time it was not Sue. It was a perfectly strange face, pale, quiet, and rather sweet. She knew it to be his wife, before he introduced them: and then in her dream, they all walked along together, and she herself smiled, talked, and even laughed. On waking, she had thought startledly, "I don't believe in dreams." But as time went on, she found more comfort in trying to believe in it. At least, to this extent she taught herself to believe in it; she had once heard a saying that "Dreams are a mirror in which we see our true selves"; and it was cheering to believe so in the case of this second dream. Like the first, it had been of a vividness such as stays by one not only all day, but for days and even weeks. It pleased her deeply to think that if such an encounter ever befell her, she could walk over the hot plowshares smiling and talking. An increase of faith in herself and in her power to play the woman gallantly dated from, and was partly based on, this dream.

By morning light, on days outwardly very happy, it seemed, sometimes, a remote contingency. There was



an imperative hopefulness in her, at times, that cast away the thought of it. And curiously enough, the slower and briefer his letters became, the more freely she indulged herself in the hopeless sweetness of her fancies.

She could not have slept, now, without kissing the picture. After kissing it, she often felt a burning in her chest, as if it lay there.

That hard, sound health of hers made her sleep well, except on the nights after she had had a letter from him, or had written to him. Then she was apt to lie awake until the small hours. She rose, however, physically perfectly fresh on the next day. If there was any difference in her, it was only in a little heaviness and slowness. Perhaps her eyelids were a little heavier.

Sue had fixed on the second week in November for her wedding, and was married at noon on a wild, tempestuous, dark, drenching day of equinoctial storm. She was married in old Christ Church, in Cambridge, of which an ancestor of hers had been the first rector. She wore a beautiful old silver brooch which he had given her ancestress on her remote, forgotten wedding-day within the same old low brown walls. Ellen was a bridesmaid. It had seemed at first too difficult, but when the day came nearer, and the merciful bustle about dress and hat, time-tables, and wedding present came on, it grew easier and easier.

“And besides,” Ellen had thought, in her old formula, “what’s the use of not going to Sue’s wedding? If I’m going to be disappointed in love, what good will it do me to stick my head in the sand and not be willing to be round when other people are extra happy? What if Sue were to be disappointed in love?—God forgive me!”

The notion frightened her. She felt, in that illogical way of hers, that if she let Sue's beautiful happiness hurt her, it would be partly her fault if Sue's happiness came to an end. She hurried all the more to get her bridesmaid's dress ready.

She took the picture down off the wall and packed it in her suitcase amidst her bridesmaid's finery. At the last minute she packed his letters too. She had not meant to take them. She seldom read them over now. She had not had one for three weeks. It was only a feeling of forlornness at leaving them behind that made her give way and put them in, when the stage was at the door.

And after all, Sue's wedding was quite cheerful and happy and pleasant. It even came into her mind, as she went up to greet the bride and groom and saw that steadfast look of friendship in Sue's eyes, unmistakably showing through the bridal look she so vividly wore,—that constant look she had tried to describe by calling it

“Robust and tender,”

—it came into her mind that such clear and solid depths of friendship were not to be received by any person who also claimed the full fruition of love. It was not the first time she had thought modestly about the amount of happiness any one person could claim.

There was something further connected with that thought. Something came out of it in the stillness of that night, in the strange room in the Redwood house, like a butterfly out of a chrysalis. It tried its weak wings at first tremblingly, then more and more confidently.

If there were meaning in that dream of Sue's picture in the locket Franklin Tallman wore, there might be days

coming, not such a long way ahead, when she could find some satisfaction, at least, in the fact that he had been capable of divining and loving so great and fine a nature as Sue's. She conceived herself as modifying Emerson's inhuman paradox to a mere statement of fact.

"My lover is nobler  
Than to love me."

How fast and far her feeling for him had grown, since that Sunday when she had deliberately taken him down to see Julia! And yet was she so sure she would not have done the same thing again, if it were next Sunday instead of thirteen or fourteen weeks ago? The challenge to take the uttermost risk (perhaps because of her very cowardice!) had always been compellingly attractive to her. Along with all that wanted to be soft and safe, there was in her something impatient with prudence and safety—something that in a great matter like love couldn't be contented unless it were founded on a rock which feared no wave or storm.

Thinking of all these things, she had got into bed without kissing the picture. When she remembered it, she got up and felt her way, in the chill of November midnight in a fireless room, round the unfamiliar furniture, to where she had left it, and now, when she felt that the original was less hers than ever, instead of merely kissing it, she put it into her breast, and slept with it there.

## CHAPTER XVI

### DECEMBER

"McQUAID'S" for January had a poem in it by Ellen M. Graham. It was "Alexandra," which Franklin Tallman had carried off with him to submit to his fellow-editors. It would have brought a good deal back into Ellen's mind, if she had had time yet to forget anything. It was the first of her verses ever printed, except the one a year earlier in the *Harvard Monthly*. The immediate past was an Æolian harp to every wind that blew, as this blew hard, upon it. Memories reverberated louder than thunder at the sight of these lines, which she had written in the first warmth of friendship, and read aloud to the man with whom she was in love.

By the time it came out, they were expecting Jim and his father for the holidays. Mr. Graham had not come on for his usual seaside trip with his children, last year. He was to make all the longer stay now; and the New York month had been postponed by the aunts to February or March.

Mr. Graham and Jim arrived on the same train on the afternoon next but one before Christmas. In the intervals of studying, *con amore*, his chemistry, Jim mixed up a thick and syrupy cough mixture for his father, who had somehow got a very bad bronchial cough, though Aunt Fran said mountain air would do more for it than Jim's nostrums.

Ellen felt more than a little anxious about her father. In all the heaviness of her spirits, and her semi-stupor, anxiety for him pierced sharply through, and found a sore spot to touch her upon. He had grown older, a good deal older, in the last few years. It seemed a sort of foreboding on Aunt Fran's part, when she reminded Ellen that her father had not been married very young; and that that lost little sister Sarah whom Ellen remembered had been the last of several little children her poor mother had lost, "from the top down." Mr. Graham's congenital stoop was accentuated. His fair, foreign face had lost much of its British color, and drooped into folds, noticeably about the mouth. The spare room where he slept (the old store-room made over) was next the one where Ellen slept with her aunt, and she heard him, in the small hours, wheezily strangling. Her Aunt Fran persuaded him to see good old solemn Dr. Temple. The doctor, using the good old-fashioned word, said his cough was partly bronchial, partly "tisiky." The tisiky part was negligible, for the present, he said: adding with ponderous humor, "Folks often wish they *could* die of asthma. Your heart's all right, for the present; so're your lungs. You're in very fair condition, in fact, for a man of your age—of your and my age," he summed up. "But it's not youth,—it's not youth, Mr. Graham. It's the health of an elderly man."

"Father dear, what a joke his calling you an elderly man!" said Ellen with a rather set smile.

"Well, child! I'm over sixty. I was past my first youth when I married your mother."

“What's sixty, I'd like to know? Look at the old deacons in the Congregational Church—neither of 'em'll ever see seventy again.” Her own words shot a dull chill through her heart, to think how few years separated sixty from seventy. A dreary chill it was, more numbing than painful: but hers was not a heart to rest in one sorrow alone, when another knocked at the gate. The earlier sorrow, too, was all her own: but this cast a family shadow.

All through the autumn she had dreaded Christmas Day: how much more now, when that loud wheezing cough went on so incessantly from midnight until three, every night. And Christmas Eve was sorrowfully beautiful. There was a glassy crust on the snow, and the stars and moon were shining, and the whole valley eastward to Hemlock Mountain had a look of being new, as if this were the first December moonlight night since the world was made. Clear and joyful weather sometimes bruises the heart of youth, when it is sad, with an incredible soreness.

Like Sue's wedding, however, the day itself was not at all hard. It was comparatively easy to wonder and exclaim over presents that represented so much affectionate contriving and considering, as family presents do. They all went to church, and wished everyone Merry Christmas, and the same to you and many of them, and came home to overeat at a rich fine dinner, just as usual: and Ellen tucked up her skirts and went out to coast with Jim in the afternoon, just as they had done many a time before. But last Christmas seemed ten years ago, or rather twenty-five, or fifty. How many years measured the difference between a free heart and a laden one? She

sighed, and rested, as if helping to pull the bob-sleds up the hill were too hard for her.

"Tired, sis?" asked Jim. "Sit down there and I'll haul you up."

"No, Jim—I'm not tired—only worried. About father."

"Father'll be all right."

"He's never had as bad a cough as this before, though, I'm afraid."

"He'll get over it all right. Not but what I wish he'd take that stuff I fixed up for him. Nobody seems to think I know anything: and yet I do," said Jim, with cheerful sangfroid.

"I wish he *would* take it, Jimmy, if it'd do him any good."

"Oh well, old Doc. Temple gave him some stuff that's probably just as good."

"Do you think his lungs are all right?"

"Sure."

"Oh, Jim, it does me good to hear you so cheerful."

"Why ain't you cheerfuller, I'd like to know?"

"Why, I told you. Worried about—father."

"There's more than that the trouble, old lady."

"Well, Jim dear,—there is."

"Why not talk it over with me? Instead of coasting, we'll take a walk. We'll walk down the valley. By the way, when's Julia going to get spliced? Not till spring, I s'pose."

"Not till spring.—Why not go up the Flat Iron road, or the Three Maples, Jim, if you'd just as soon?"

"I'd rather go down the valley, I think. Remember,

sis, I haven't been home since the first of September. I think I'm entitled to choose the road."

Fanciful ideas were always coming into Ellen's head nowadays. She must needs fancy now that Jim had a schoolboyish fondness for Julia, and felt sad about her engagement. She said:

"All right. We'll go down the valley, then. But I'm not sure whether I want to talk much."

"Needn't, if you don't want to."

"I don't know whether I want to or not."

"Just as you please, old lady."

They swung into an easy stride, Jim modifying the natural stretch of his long legs a little, and Ellen letting out her powers, which made them meet on a fairly even plane. They were walking a little under four miles an hour. The dry, crusty snow crunched squeakily under their heels, as it had done on the day, long years ago, when walking down this road, Julia had said to Ellen:

"Someway I don't think you'll ever marry."

This came into Ellen's mind, and carried her back yet further, to the remark her little brother had made on the day she found the tarantula.

"Jim, do you know when you were a tiny little boy you said something to me once that had a whole lot of sense?"

"Why, certainly, old lady. I always had sense. What was it I said?"

"You called me an old maid."

"Well, I don't know that there was any great amount of sense in that."

"Yes, there was. You saw ahead."



"In my experience——"

"Your experience!"

"—a girl that says she's going to be an old maid is generally intending to get married."

"Well, Jimmy dear, *I'm* not."

"All right. Have it your own way. It lets me out of a wedding present, and being an usher."

Ellen scarcely heard him. She stared at the familiar, unfamiliar road, which she saw not in December, but in August colors, with wayside asters, and bleaching golden-rod, and showery sprays of Michaelmas daisies sprinkling sugar over the grass. They walked along in silence for a considerable time. A cutter or two passed them, and muffled voices called out "Merry Christmas!" and were mechanically wished the same, and many of them. They passed several farmhouses sparsely placed, a half-mile or so apart: and then they came to the old red bridge over the Ballantyne.

Ellen had, for some few minutes, forgotten that she was not alone: and now, in a sort of dream, she thought aloud:

"This was where——!"

"Where what, sis?"

"Oh, nothing. Just a notion. It's getting colder: and unless you want to go down and stop at the Oldenburys'——"

"The Oldenburys'—nit!"

"Then let's turn round. There's that dark-red after-glow all over Hemlock."

"Yes—looks natural, all right."

"Jimmy, I believe I *will* tell you. I'm very—very fond of Franklin Tallman."

"Good for you, Ellen! I'm awfully glad; I sure am. Why don't you send for him?"

"Why, Jimmy,—don't say you're glad. You see, I don't send for him, because——"

She put her arm through her brother's arm, her pace flagging a little. Her breath was short, like her father's in his bronchial-asthmatic coughing fits.

"Because, Jimmy, he wouldn't want to come."

"What's the matter? Did you turn him down last summer?"

"No—oh no!"

"Guess I better call and see the gentleman," said Jim, with something of the primeval brother in his voice. "What's his address?"

"Jimmy, dear—he never pretended he cared. Now I've told you all there is to tell. I'm glad I've told you. You see, these merry-making days come a little hard to a person, at first."

"I got hit myself . . . last year. I've got fellow-feeling for you, sis, all right."

Ellen smiled wanly to herself, skeptical of how hard hit her young brother had probably been. But she wondered, after all, if it had been rather hard (and could it have been Julia?) when he went on to say:

"Do you ever think of the next world, old lady?"

"Yes indeed. I always have."

"Well, do the conventional ideas satisfy you?"

"No, they don't, Jim. Not at all."

"They don't me, either. I want to come back to this world again."

"Why, Jim, how curious you should think of that! Sue and I've often talked about successive lives; but that

was when we—when I didn't care so much: when I didn't depend so much on the next life. Lately I've been thinking about it a good deal."

"Successive lives sound sensible to me."

"So they do to me. And if—if we *do* come back, so many tangles can be smoothed out, and so many things we've missed can be made up to us, right here on the spot! We'd really rather have what we've wanted and longed for, than something else, somewhere else, that was just as good."

"Or better, as they say."

"Maybe that's what Jesus meant when he told the Jews they should be comforted in Jerusalem. I remember I thought of that when I read how the Romans crucified five hundred Jews along the road outside of Jerusalem, for revolting. I remember I thought I'd like to be there, to see those very Jews comforted in Jerusalem."

"You're a queer old lady."

A queer old lady she must have been, for a queer thing happened that evening. It was the only "psychical research thing" that ever happened to her. After the usual pantry lunch which surfeited families indulge in, with such cosy merriment, on holiday evenings, they all sat down to play grabouge. The wind had sprung up, and was beating the dead clematis vine against the piazza railings, as it had done on so many winter nights in the old days. The moon, in a sky of racing, billowing clouds, shone, dipped, and shone again. It was such a night without as warmed the inside of a small house full of people who loved one another in unaffected simple-heartedness.

"Draw, Ellen."

Ellen had to be reminded, almost every time her turn came round, to draw her card and play. She was helplessly relapsing into a fit of intense absent-mindedness. The afternoon walk had brought back that Sunday afternoon walk of four months ago in incredible brilliancy of detail. She was still going over it step by step, word by word.

"It's Ellen's turn again."

"Come back, Ellen."

She drew, played, and relapsed with a sigh into her moody dream. Suddenly she started, and half got up from her chair.

"Where are you going, Ellen?"

"Somebody's at the door!"

"Why, I didn't hear anything."

"Neither did I."

"Nor I."

They were unanimous.

"I'll go and look, though, if you want me to."

Jim lazily drew his legs out from under the table. He flung open the door and let in a blast of icy freshness that nearly blew the lamps out.

"Nobody in sight, sis."

Ellen was staring at him. Plainly she had seen, or heard, or felt—it was none, and yet all, of these!—a letter handed to him through the open door. An intense thrill ran all over her body. She was intensely conscious of the letter. It was in Jim's hand. It was addressed to her. She put her hand out to take it from him, as he approached the table.

"What you want, sis?"

"My——"

"Why, I've got nothing of yours."

She said nothing more, but subsided, abashed, into the game. There was something here which it was impossible to understand. And yet it was borne in, pressingly, on her mind, that that letter had come through the door. Jim *must* know about it.

As they all went upstairs, she took hold of his sleeve and pulled him back a step or two.

"Jim!" she whispered, "haven't you got a letter for me?"

"Why, no," he answered, half impatiently. "No mail this afternoon, you know, sis. Legal holiday—post-office closed. We came right by it, coming up from the valley at five o'clock, didn't we? You *are* absent-minded, old lady."

"Jim! Wasn't there *really* anybody at the door, that time?"

"What time? What're you talking about, anyway?"

"Why, that time I said I heard somebody at the door. I thought somebody handed you a letter——"

He looked at her very gravely, and said:

"Take plenty of sleep for awhile, old lady."

Think as she would, she could only feel that intense consciousness that the letter had been left at the door. What it meant she could no more understand after sleeping over it. It had been five weeks since she had heard from Franklin Tallman;—not since about the time of Sue's wedding. Together, or almost together, two intuitions flashed into her mind, and together they were discarded. One was, that a letter from him was en route, and would be in the morning mail. The other was that he was sick or dying.

Ellen shook her mind free of such notions, not without an actual blush at the foolishness of having had them at all. She felt forlornly deteriorated from herself of a year ago. Half-heartedly she wished, or thought she wished, she could go back and be free and cheerful, without the intolerable heaviness by which she paid for the immeasurable sweetness of a few summer days. Better be a child forever, and keep the blue sky.

She lay awake so long, she slept at last very well. She must have slept too deeply to hear her father cough at all in the usual hours, from twelve to three.

She and he went up together for the morning mail. She had deliberately put off going until eleven o'clock; dusting the parlor and dining-room with extra care, and making charlotte russe for dinner. She did not admit to herself that she was half afraid to go, in the midst of an eager desire to be off.

"Well, father," she said at last, "I'm ready now."

They stepped out abreast into the bright twinkling icy morning, intensely white and blue. Her father coughed a little, but stepped along boyishly, squaring his stooped yet youthful shoulders, and springing forward from his heels.

"I shall soon shake off this bronchitis of mine," he said with his usual light-heartedness. "It puts me in mind of *my* father. He always had a wheeze, and yet he lived to a patriarchal old age."

"Oh, father dear, I hope you *will* shake off that horrid cough, right away."

"By the bye, Ellen, what's become of that young man I hear you had up here last summer?"

"Why, I don't know, father. I haven't heard from him for quite a while."

"So that's the way you get even with your old dad, when I don't come east and take you to the seashore, hey? What kind of a fellow was he? Your aunts don't seem to agree about him. Frances liked him very well, Sarah hadn't a good word to say for him."

Ellen endured this, but could do no more.

"Your Aunt Sarah wants to keep you an old maid, I believe, Ellen," said her father. "Well, she's a good woman. The women of your mother's family were all good, honest, kind, motherly women, God bless 'em."

"Well, here we are, father."

"Here we are. I hope the mail's sorted. Oh yes—the window's up. Box fifty-seven, please. Here's one letter for you, Ellen. Well, shall we go home? Didn't I hand you a letter? What have you done with it?"

"I've got it, father."

It was in her bosom, safe from her own panting haste.

"What a pace you're setting, Ellen!"

"Am I, father?"

"Oh, I can keep up with you!"

How could she be walking fast, when her legs shook so?

"What does this sweetheart of yours do, Ellen?"

"Sweetheart indeed!—He's on *McQuaid's Magazine*."

("O father, please!")

"Why doesn't he take some of your poems and stories for *McQuaid's*, then?"

"*McQuaid's* did take one, father."

("Please! Please! We're almost home.")

They were at home at last. In her locked room she opened the letter. It was in pencil. The handwriting was a little uncertain. It said:

"I am getting over typhoid fever. I have been here in the hospital for a month. They won't let me write much. But I must write and tell you the truth, though of course you aren't interested, and will think it uncalled for. All the time I have been sick I knew I must write and tell you."

"Steady, now," Ellen said to herself.

"When we first met, I thought no man could be happier than I should be with you, if you could do me such great grace. Up on the mountain, walking down the valley, I thought so more and more. And when you showed me that fine poem 'Alexandra,' it almost made me laugh to think you really believed such a person as Alexandra existed. But then I saw her. And I began to believe perhaps you were right. I have tried more and more to put her out of my mind, and release myself from the troubling vividness of my recollection of her, and I have not succeeded. I know that she is married. It seems to make no difference.

"Please excuse me for my unreasonable impulse to tell you this. It will only trouble your friendliness for me with pity, I know.

"Your 'Alexandra' was accepted by *McQuaid's*, and perhaps it has been already printed during my illness. I hope to read many more of your poems in print. May I end by thanking you from my soul for the hours you gave me? May you be happy forever."

The surgeon had probed the wound very well, and it could now heal wholesomely.



Some time afterwards—two years, perhaps—when the wound was quite healed, she placed the letter where it long lay, imperceptibly yellowing, in the pages of Isaiah, at the chapter which begins:

“Sing, O barren, thou that did'st not bear.”

## CHAPTER XVII

### A MUSE IN SUNBONNETS

It always seemed to Ellen, afterward, that she grew into middle age when that letter came. Real middle age, when she arrived at it, looked back on this premature maturity with quizzical, if indulgent eyes. But when twenty-one thinks it feels like thirty-one, it produces a sense of illimitable age.

As a matter of fact, the change in her, swift as it was, took four years to complete itself. All those idle ecstasies of early girlhood, all those fallow half-hours spent, long ago, mulling over beautiful colors and shadows on the mountains, beautiful sounds in poetry; and all those more recent hours of brooding remembrance;—they were not left behind in a day, or a month. But they were steadily left behind, and in their place welled up an incessant, new, practical energy, a blind longing to be busy, to be fruitful, to be banded with others, as many as possible, all working together. It seemed as if she had spent all those idle years waiting for love to pass by, and as if, now that love had passed, and there was no longer any danger of her missing it, she were ready to turn to and do her share (could she but find out what it was) of the world's daily work.

It was in very small things, for the most part, that she noticed the outward visible signs of the transforma-

tion. For example, she suddenly noticed, in the second year after the letter had come, that nobody ever said to her any more:

"Come back, Ellen! Come down out of the clouds."

It was not, however, the letter alone which hurried her forward out of youth. Home anxieties had thickened. Her father had jovially shaken off his cough and wheeze, as he had promised to do, only to begin a fresh bout with them the next (and after that, every) winter. Jim said:

"Oh, father'll get over this, and many like it, all right," but added more seriously:

"Of course, he's not so young any more."

Mr. Graham was now about sixty-five. That still seemed young, when one thought of some of the old deacons and farmers round Tory Hill and Tewkesbury, active in their tough, wiry eighties. In time, too, these coughs and wheezes always went away, and left him planning for his carefully calculated week or ten days at the seashore, with Ellen and Jim, if Jim could come. Jim could come perhaps for a Sunday. He was working in the summers, to help with his expenses at the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

This year, they wouldn't go, wrote Mr. Graham, until the sun had "baked the water" all summer long. Perhaps he did not realize any other reason, in the back of his mind, for postponing the slight effort of making the sea-trip, until late August. Any slight languor he felt he set down to the weather, which was very sultry in Minneapolis that summer of 1907. Ellen was never sorry to be away on these August anniversaries, however pleasant and engrossing life had become again for her.

And lately Aunt Fran was not very well. Ruddy, gallant Aunt Fran, who was only fifty-odd, and who had always said her ideal of life was to clean house all day and go to a ball in the evening; foolish Aunt Fran, who had always been so concerned about Jim's and Ellen's health, and declared, so solemnly, so many times, that their constitutions were delicate;—she herself now fell into a baffling digestive trouble, and was obliged at times to nourish herself, or as she said, to starve herself, on those patent prepared foods which she so cheerfully and heartily hated.

It had been during their last annual trip to New York that Ellen had found herself persistently wishing to get at her desk in the cubby-hole of the hall at home, and to write verses. They were a new kind of verses which now floated through her mind, nebulous but very much alive: versified sketches of the quaint people and places she could always amuse herself by fancying. The old piece "Atlantis Town" had been a little on the same order: but there was a homely, simple, delicately humorous character about these, as she visualized them, which differentiated them from anything else of the kind she knew about, or had thought of before. There was a notion in her mind, too, of making them embody some shy and covert gospel of gentleness and brotherly love. She scribbled down some titles for them: "Hemlock Cemetery on Memorial Day," "Persia Township," "Dusk Hollow"; and some half-symbolic names for imaginary people, "Mr. Goodchild," "Elva Wood," and "Titania's Daughter." On the back of an old envelope or two she jotted down the dress and occupations for these fragmentary dramatis personæ. The whole idea pleased her

immensely. These verses were to be altogether objective. Nothing of herself was to be put into them. They would be like a set of watercolor or pastel portraits, with a thin wash or veil of symbolism or romance drawn over them.

They would not necessarily be altogether fiction. She thought she could fleetingly prolong the memory of some school-fellows, and of some of the strongly individualized old men and women who had walked, in her childhood, in Tory Hill Old Street, and left their sayings, and the pungent flavor of their personalities, behind. Some excellent subjects for such sunbonnet verses still walked the slate sidewalks of the Old Street.

By the time they had reached home in the earliest spring, she had been all ready to begin. Her first attempt was a puritanical child kicking over the traces and embarking on a tiny puritanical spree of sorts. She sent it to *Scribner's*, and it was taken. The check seemed very fat. She wrote to her father that she believed, at this rate, she could finance her own part of the trip to the seashore this year.

She wrote more and more of them, and every night at teatime or bedtime fresh fancies came into her head. She wrote out the most endearing of them, taking about a week to polish and melodify each: and about one in three was sold. Sometimes it was sold to a newspaper, for a small check, and sometimes to a magazine, for a larger one. She wrote about the motherly little brothers she saw playing in recess at the district school, with their eyes always on some fat tumbling little one near by. She wrote about the peaceful, pottering old age of seafaring men and veterans of the Civil War; and she wrote one fiery piece about the lumbermen at their dangerous

trade in the silent depths of the winter forests in mountain hollows far from any village. This piece she sold to the *Atlantic*. It was a good deal copied about: and the *Tory Hill Weekly Chronicle* gave it a half column of laudation and local pride.

These sunbonnets were interrupted twice during the early summer: once by an acute attack of Aunt Fran's dyspepsia, which frightened them all badly for a few days: and once by a letter from Sue which made Ellen as happy as it seemed to her anything could ever make her again.

"Aunt Jane, in Tewkesbury," Sue wrote from Cambridge, "owns a monstrous lot of land along the lower end of the valley. She's just made us a present (really I suppose it's a belated wedding present) of a couple of acres. Father says he'll equip it, if we want to try. If! David is as anxious as I am to try it: and we've definitely decided, within the last twenty-four hours, to move up there. We're going to move as soon as we can, perhaps by the middle of July. Think, Ellen! you and I'll be able to see each other as often as ever we like. Do put your old bike in order, and be ready to ride down and see us the day we arrive."

"Sue does nothing by halves," said Ellen to herself. "If she says the middle of July, perhaps she'll be up here by the first."

She was almost correct. By the fourth of July the Micantonis were moved, and in a week they were settled, in the small old farmhouse a mile or two below the covered bridge on the Tewkesbury road.

Sue was writing a novel. It was the most exciting thing she had ever done, she told Ellen; so exciting that

she almost forgot to watch the baby as he tumbled about in the rough tussocky grass of the dooryard. She said she was tangled in the web she had conceived, and felt at times more bewildered than any of her characters. "David," she said, "wants me to put a lot of labor unrest into it. You know all those piles of tomes on the floor are his statistics. He's given up even the memory of engineering, to work at economics; he does a good deal along that line. I'm surprised to find how well it pays. At this rate we can soon get a pony for little David," on which Sue snatched up her little boy, in his crumpled dress, off the grass, and began talking the most delicious fairy talk to him.

"Something in the atmosphere down here at your house, Sue," said Ellen, "makes me very much dissatisfied with my sunbonnets. I feel the same way when I read things that are particularly intolerable, in the papers; and there's something intolerable every day. Why can't I write about it, I'd like to know?"

"David would say you have chronic boiling of the blood."

"That's it, exactly! I never read about these ghastly tenement fires, or the infant death-rate in the crowded districts, or occupational diseases,—think, Sue!—think of a man's work poisoning him! Think of earning your daily bread by being poisoned!—that I don't feel like tearing something, some code of laws or customs, to pieces, and burning it up."

"Ellen, dear, why *don't* you write verses, then, about the way you feel?"

"I can't, Sue! I can't! All my finicking little verses can do without apoplexy is to lisp out, 'Please, every-

body, be kind!’ The moment I try to write anything indignant, I lose my meter and my adjectives and everything else. The teeth of my pen chatter so I can’t write! It’s new wine in old bottles, I believe.”

Sue looked wisely and tenderly at her friend, over little David’s black head in her lap.

“Isn’t that a good deal to say, my dear, after all? What more, really, do you want?”

“I want to say ‘Justice!’ with a two-edged voice.”

“Well, yes, perhaps. I believe I set more store by the quiet, friendly writing, though. It seems to me the most useful and the most reasonable. Really the strongest.”

“All very well, Sue, but I wish I could write something about the way the churches shirk the big questions of the day, for example; and my theory that that’s why so many young men stay away from church, because it’s so timid and dull and comforting and safe. Though for that matter some stalwart-looking young men *are* timid and dull.—I’ve got as far as a title for that piece, by the way, Sue; what do you think of ‘The Young Man Militant’?”

“I think hurrah.”

“But I don’t know whether I can write it. The least little bit of indignation, and my hand shakes as if I had palsy.”

“Think about it a little longer, then, and a little harder. See it from a few more angles.”

“What do you mean, Sue?”

“Why, you know my old theory, that nothing hinders good writing but the lack of clear persevering thinking. I was always tickled with what Mr. Chesterton said about *Sordello*, though whether it’s deserved or not’s another



question; *I* wouldn't be impudent enough to judge. As applied to small fry like you and me, though, it *is* a good definition and no mistake."

"What did he say?"

"He said it was true that nobody could see to the bottom of *Sordello*; but that wasn't because it was deep: only muddy."

"Sue dear, I really believe that *is* the matter with me. Muddy thinking! Muddy thinking!"

"Well, my dear woman, you're in excellent company, if you've got the same fault that Browning had."

"Muddy thinking! That's the very thing. You see, I fairly burst with indignation: I'm fairly raw at the wrong-headedness and wrong-heartedness I see in the world: but who knows any way out?"

"When you've thought longer and harder, it's quite conceivable that you may come to the conclusion that there *isn't* any way out, except a very old, neglected, grass-grown one."

"The Sermon on the Mount, you mean?"

Sue nodded gravely, adding:

"I say that to David sometimes: but he says that as long as we congregate together for everything else, we'll always have a tough time of it trying to be Christians separately."

The clock in the little old farmhouse kitchen struck five.

"I must be off," said Ellen. "Where did I leave my bike?"

"Wait till I put a stick in the range, and I'll come and walk a little way up the valley with you."

Ellen wheeled her bicycle round to the gate, and Sue

came with her, as usual, linking arms, through the covered bridge and a mile or so up the Tory Hill road.

"Speaking of the Sermon on the Mount, Ellen, seems to me your sunbonnets, always winsomely teasing people to be nice to each other,—well, I think you might do worse. But as you say, there's more in the Sermon on the Mount than that. Why not read along David's line of economics and sociology awhile? It might clear away whatever cloudiness there is in your thinking."

"I'll think it over, Sue. Economics sound rather uninviting. What's that you've got under your arm?"

"I brought it along to read you," said Sue, resting her typed sheets, in their loose-leaf cover, on Ellen's handlebars.

"Oh, what is it? Your last chapter?"

"On my novel. Yes. I've read you up to this."

She began to read aloud, in her rapid, clear, light voice. The chapter, though it moved fast, was long: and they were almost up to the Oldenbury farm when she finished.

"Well, Sue," said Ellen, "*your* thinking's clear enough, God bless it. It's fairly pellucid. I believe it's almost too clear. I declare I think I'd like a haze of atmosphere over your wonderful hawk-eyed prose!"

"Nothing very wonderful, I'm afraid, Ellen, about my prose. Purple patches aren't in my line, and I only want a pale, thin, watery wash of local color."

"I wouldn't like you, for any sakes, to change! You've got what we used to talk about at college, in the Red-Haired corner of Room Q,

"'Beauty's law of plainness and content.'"

"Oh! As to beauty——"

"I guess Minerva looked like your lovely plain writing, Sue,—no frills or flounces, no crimps in her hair."

Ellen's aunts endured shop talk from her very patiently as a rule, but when she added economics, and began to mix them both up with a militant, defiant way of talking about strikes that were being reported in the papers, they displayed some bewildered impatience.

"Where does a daughter of Mary Mowbray get it?" they asked each other.

"Your mother never had any such ideas. She didn't know anything about laboring men, except the ones that worked for her father; and naturally she was always kind to *them*. But she went on with her church work, and her home duties, and accepted the world as it was."

"Didn't she ever read the papers?" asked Ellen.

"Of course she did, and she was quite excited at election times: we all were; we wanted the Republicans to win, because our father was a Republican."

"Were the Republicans always in the right, did you think?"

"We left all such questions to the men. We could trust our father to know how he ought to vote; he didn't need our advice!"

"I wonder," said Ellen under her breath, "if the girls whose fathers were Democrats didn't think along the same lines that mother and Aunt Fran and Aunt Sallie did?"

"I must confess," her aunt said presently, "that I sometimes think I should like to vote. Sometimes I think I should like it in more than town affairs. But I should always vote the good old Republican ticket. My

father taught me to despise a mugwump. I would *far rather* be an out and out Democrat!"

There was one big strike in the West that summer. The papers talked so much about it, that it even penetrated to piazza conversation, and accelerated the motion of rocking-chairs. Women whom Ellen met at teas and bridge began to talk about it, and to say that perhaps the working classes were really oppressed, and that they certainly ought to have a living wage. The women seemed to talk more about it than the men did. In the office of the Windward House, and along the three-sided veranda that ran round the office, Ellen sometimes heard such ardent voices that she would pause, on her way home from the library, with a new book on economics under her arm, to listen and see if the comely white-flanneled figures sitting there smoking were talking, by any chance, about the strike. But they never were. It was always:

"I played that hole in bogey, and put him four down and three to go," or,

"I was forty-eight going out; I played rotten—foozled every drive."

There were very few books on economics in the library. Ellen read all there were, however, and learned at least what the terms meant. David Micantoni's piles of dust-white statistics looked too formidable to borrow. In the books she did find to read, she felt a complaisance with injustice, and a disposition to shoulder on Nature a good deal that she vaguely believed was due to the collective moral and intellectual laziness of men. She felt these qualities in them, whether judging them correctly or not; but when she asked herself what better thesis she could

herself propose, it all came back to a passionate demand for more kindness in the world.

For whether the workingman were to have, for example, a living wage, an American-standard living wage, or not, unless he could secure it by the transient, local, ugly weapon of the strike, seemed to depend altogether on the good-will of his employer. The worker seemed very much in the position of the vivisected animal in the laboratory. Both might be, and often were, treated with consideration, but it depended entirely on the employer, and on the vivisector, how they were treated. The worker could strike, the ulcerated dog could try to bite; another dog, which saw, or surmised, his fellow-dog's slow death, could snap at the enterprising boy who tried to entice him to the laboratory door. The whip hand, however, was that of the vivisector, and the employer. So much of Ellen's thinking had grown clear.

The collapse of that great Western strike gave another impulse to the slow clarifying of her thought. It pointed a moral which had been still more clearly shown, in microcosm, by the collapse of a trial Ellen's Aunt Sallie had instituted that summer, in the name of the Tory Hill S.P.C.A. It was a case against a farmer who had beaten his horse with a cant-hook. Excited complaints had been made by the neighbors on both sides: so excited that the complainants forgot to add the usual caution:

"Don't mention me, please. Something ought to be done about it, but I don't want my name should be mixed up in it."

Not only had the complainants forgotten to use this venerable formula, but one or two, in their indignation, had promised to testify in court. The warrant was ac-

cordingly issued, and the case was called; but the cautious persuadings of relations and friends, coupled with the good old-fashioned feeling that cruelty to animals is a matter of mere "sentiment," had prevailed. To her dismay Miss Sarah Mowbray found that not a witness would swear to the cant-hook. The case was dismissed.

The nearness of this case made it seem temporarily almost comparable in quality, though so absurdly not in degree, with the failure of the Western strike. They seemed cut off the same piece of cloth. In both cases, as in the case of the hypothetical dog which tried to bite the vivisector, the last end of that rebel would be, if possible, worse than the first. The strikers in the West would be unlikely now to have a raise of wages for many a long day; and the horse could be beaten with the cant-hook with proved impunity. So Ellen, being still young, and not conceding much human nature, or embryonic decency, to her opponents, rather bitterly thought.

Well, her thinking was clearer by one more point, which emerged from the double failure of the strike and the animal case. Ellen formulated it to herself as follows:

"There isn't much in the appeal to force. For the side that's in the wrong is very apt to win: and when it wins, *Vae Victis!*"

At this moment a note came from the editor of the *Womanly World*. He inquired pleasantly why no more verses had been sent in lately, adding that he needed a few inches filled in several forthcoming issues. Ellen showed this note to Sue, remarking:

"You see, even if my muddy thinking *has* cleared up a little, it's not so clear yet that I can do anything but

sunbonnets. I'd better keep on with 'em, with their tadpole morals, for the present, don't you think so?"

"Of course I think so, and more than that, I hope you'll never altogether give up writing them, my dear woman. David and I caught one another wiping our eyes over the last verse of 'Titania's Daughter.'"

"That raises it fifteen cents in my estimation," Ellen called back over her shoulder, as she set off homeward on her bike.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE LAST TRIP TO THE SEA

"MEET me Boston noon Thursday seventeen bring bathing togs," wired Mr. Graham on the twelfth of August.

Ellen wired back:

"Hurrah all right."

This was the way they customarily arranged their summer seaside holiday together. Jim of course could only come for a Sunday. He was working for fifteen dollars a week for a big carpet firm in New York, dipping his pillow-case in ice water to enable him to sleep in the unaccustomed hot nights of the city August. When he could get to sleep on those fearsome nights, he dreamed of the cool breezy golf links, and of the low scores he might have made by this end of the season, if he had been playing there all summer. But his spirits were perfectly light and free, as his well-considered choice had been. He would rather carry a medicine case than a bag of clubs: though he meant, before his youth was gone, to carry both.

There was a great tournament going on at Tory Hill in the third week in August. It was the play for the President's cup, and golfers of renown were filling the Windward House and all the rentable rooms the proprietor could borrow from the "natives." Ellen took a whole



afternoon off from her economics and her verse-writing, and went up to the sunburnt meadows (where the original nine-hole course had been expanded now to eighteen) to watch the finals. She felt a good deal of pleasure in the beautiful game itself, even when Jim was not playing: and the sense, always so exhilarating to her, of being in a company of people united by one purpose, was present today in being one of the streaming gallery of onlookers that trailed such a bright banner of pretty summer dresses and parasols over the bright fields. The open country, the holiday concourse of people, and the beauty and accuracy of the match between the national champion and the slim freshman who had that year become intercollegiate champion, quite absorbed Ellen. She forgot, for the hour, the whole dark Iliad of that lost strike in the Western mines, about which, of late, she had been thinking so much, and blaming all these vivacious people for thinking so little.

The freshman won the cup: and the excitement and semi-tragedy of the champion's defeat were fresh in Ellen's mind as she walked home while the sun set behind Windward Mountain. She would write it all out for Jim, to make him share as fully as possible in the great day he would so dearly have liked to be here for. She was not at first conscious how thoroughly warm and dusty she felt, until a glance at the clock told her she had barely time for a tub before supper. She ran the cold spring water from the faucet, and had plunged into the tub and was splashing so violently that she did not hear the doorbell ring twice. Her Aunt Sallie had come up and had been hammering for some minutes on the bathroom door before she heard anything.

"What do you say, Aunt Sallie? Telegram for me? Open it, please."

"All right. Hm. Oh, Ellen! Your father's—not well."

"Father ill? What? Quick!" shouted Ellen, shaking the icy water off and hurrying into her bathrobe.

The telegram was from the proprietor of a hotel where Mr. Graham had taken rooms for himself and Ellen, on a beach near Boston where they had often gone before on these short seaside holidays. He had arrived late on the previous night, the 15th, ill with "pleurisy and bronchitis."

"Oh, Aunt Sallie, for once I wish we had a telephone! When does the evening flyer go down? 'Pleurisy and bronchitis!'"

"I *wish* I could go with you, my dear child. I daren't leave your Aunt Fran. If she should have another attack, and neither you nor I here——"

"I wouldn't have you come for worlds, Aunt Sallie! Oh, dear Aunt Sallie, don't look so sad! Jim says father will get over many an attack of bronchitis. You see there's no pneumonia. You're not to be alarmed, I tell you, Sallie Mowbray! But listen—will you telegraph Jim? I can dress, and pack, and get some supper and be ready for the stage, if you can order it, and telegraph Jim, and keep Aunt Fran from getting frightened."

Aunt Sallie ran over to the Barnhavens' and telephoned a telegram to Jim. If he were out when it was delivered he could scarcely get to Boston ahead of Ellen, whose slow night train, with a multitude of waits and changes, would be all night and half the morning getting over the paltry two hundred miles.

Ellen's heart smote her at the sight of her younger aunt in the doorway, waving, as the stage drove her off. A weight of old forebodings pressed on her heart. The imminent fear that was hurrying her off was the upper millstone, and Aunt Fran on the sofa in the little parlor, with spirits of ammonia to forestall her frequent palpitation of the heart, and the nervous dyspeptic chills which often followed it, was the nether millstone. The shadowy circles round Aunt Sallie's lovely gray eyes were dark tonight.

"Family life," thought Ellen, "goes on year after year, even and pleasant, like the inside of a snug house in winter; and then it seems to wear out, and cracks and fissures begin to show in it as old Fuller said, and the cold outside air comes in, and draughts blow out some of the lamps and others flicker and flare—so it is with our life."

And yet the stage drive was so cool and sweet after the sultry afternoon, that it seemed, to Ellen's illogical, over-sanguine, and high-rebounding heart, an omen of comfort. Physically rested, her mind took on a brighter tinge, a reaction from foreboding set in, and by the time she boarded the common car, she was smiling and bustling cheerfully. What if her father were subject to bronchial trouble? He was so youthful and springing in his walk, so limber, slender, and active; so fond of a laugh, that he clipped jokes out of papers and pasted them in a blank book for the pleasure of laughing again and again at them! And then, *his* father, unknown old Scotch Grandfather Graham, had lived almost to ninety.

She began busily to plan his recovery, and how she would take him down to the sand every day when he was

well enough, and hoist an umbrella over him, and sit with him while he watched the surf with those British sea-loving eyes of his. He would hear it boom and break all night long, from his window; would hear it roaring and rising, roaring and receding, on Bardwell's Beach, a short eighth of a mile away from Bardwell's weather-worn and paint-blistered old shell of a hotel.

Aunt Fran, too, would certainly throw off this dyspeptic trouble. She had got over it once, long years before. Old Dr. Temple said it was nothing very serious. Why, look at Aunt Fran's color! She'd always been sound and tough. Certainly, they'd both weather through all right. It wasn't as if either of them were really old, or apoplectic, or anything like that. . . . You couldn't think otherwise, feeling so well yourself. . . .

She sat in day-cars all night, changing sometimes at dim, chilly stations, waiting in one half an hour, once, during which the dawn came. She sat on her old suitcase, and it was so cold out here on the cinders by the tracks, that she wrapped her fingers in her veil for comfort. The dawn came neither pearly nor primrose colored, not at all as poems described it; the darkness only thinned and thinned and let a damp and shadowy light, dingy and nondescript, ooze through.

There was something that insisted on making death half-friendly, half-familiar to her mind. . . . But she would not have it so. Something panic-stricken drove away the ingratiating idea. Her father would surely recover. With that sense of incredible sweetness which attends a fancy the judgment cannot support, she began to think of his return with her to Tory Hill, in September, probably: his lengthening walks up and down the

Old Street, and then down the valley, until with a burst of glory, when he was quite well again, they would walk the whole way down to Sue's, some Sunday afternoon.

Another change at six o'clock, and she was on the Boston train, due in the North station at nine. Jim would be starting, perhaps, at that hour. Or perhaps he was already en route. She made close connections, by steamboat, for Bardwell's Beach, and disembarked there at ten o'clock. There was a queer look about everything;—the pier running out into the sea, advertising miscellaneous articles to eat, drink, and wear; the bathing-houses, the pavilion, the bandstand, and the quiet further shore, the shingles, sand and rocks where she and her father had walked so often. Up there was the Bardwell House. It was not far. She carried her suitcase and walked fast. There stretched the hotel's flimsy brown frame, diagonally, along the coast shore. A porter carried up her suitcase and knocked at Room 31.

"Come in."

"Father dear, I'm here at last!"

"Why,—Ellen! I was going in—I was going to try to get up and go into Boston to meet you on the twelve-twenty-two. I thought you'd take the morning train."

Go into Boston and meet her!

He was gray, unshaven, thin, and fifty years older than he had seemed at Christmas. His head slipped and settled weakly on the pillow. In his loose-sleeved night-shirt his arms looked emaciated.

"Oh, father dearest, how long have you had this cold on your chest?"

"Why, it isn't on my chest at all! I caught cold up in North Dakota, on a fishing trip two or three weeks

ago, and got one of those bronchial coughs I'm always getting. My father had them before me, all the last years of his life. I've often had a worse one——"

His voice trailed away, and he winced a little. Ellen's swift imagination felt the pleuritic pain that must be striking its knife-edge through him, and she jumped and ran to him and slid her arm uncomfortably but comfortingly under his head, and sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Father, what doctor have you had?"

"Doctor—I don't need any doctor. Bardwell, silly body, sent for one—one of those young chaps that think themselves awfully clever. He said I had pleurisy—why! pleurisy—it's all foolishness. I'll get up after a bit, and we'll go for a stroll, and pick up some shells and pebbles—D'ye remember——"

"But, father dear! What was the doctor's name?"

"Oh! I don't know. It made no impression on me. He said he'd be in again toward evening. I'll be out when he comes, silly body."

"Toward evening, you say? He said he'd be in again this afternoon?"

"Some such nonsense. I told him he needn't bother himself to come in again at all. I wouldn't be needing him."

"Father dear, you have just as little sense as ever," cried Ellen, trying not to show any alarm or dismay. She waited a moment and then added:

"I think I'll just step down to the office and telephone him to come over now, instead of late in the afternoon. Or else I'll call in some older man, if you'd rather? I guess *I'd* rather, anyway. I'll just step down to the office and ask Mr. Bardwell about doctors."

"Bardwell's away," her father replied in his weak, pleasant voice. "He's taken a party over to the cove in his sailboat. If it hadn't been for your coming today, Ellen, d'ye know I had half a mind to go—to go along with them."

Ellen was sure that stammer was caused by the pain of the pleurisy catching his breath. She smiled, and felt the smile cut into her heart, when he added:

"I really don't want any doctor. I tell ye what, though, Ellen, I feel a bit sleepy. I think I'll take a snooze."

His voice was not sick. It was enfeebled, and he had winced several times when he had been talking of strolling along the beach. But now as he fell easily into a drowse, he looked very sick.

All alone with the sleeping sick man in the comfortless impersonal dreariness of the hotel where he and she had found summer weeks so pleasant in bygone years, Ellen felt a strong loathing mixed with her helplessness and perplexed fear. She felt a childish longing for somebody, anybody, from Tory Hill. Oh, to see one kind face! Even to hurry down to the office to telephone for the nameless doctor, she cringed from leaving him alone. There was a sick look about his beautiful veined hands, his bony arms, outside the dismal hotel counterpane—those hands that had so often patted her shoulder in days gone by, and put pennies into her grimy fingers to stop her childish tears. All over her in a rush came the remembrance of the surreptitious lumps of sugar, the bits of candy, and the frosting off his cake which he slyly gave to her and Jim, though he, childlike and simple-hearted that he was,

had liked sweet frosting too. In her excess and panic of anxiety she cringed at the necessity for leaving him here now asleep, alone with that dreary varnishless washstand, and flowerless, bookless empty table—dreary stale newspapers tousled together on the floor.

She pulled herself together, shook off her paralytic fear and passionate distaste, and ran down the corridor and stairs to the young clerk smoking and manicuring his hands in the office. When she asked him the name of “the doctor my father had,” he stared, bit on his cigarette, and called to an invisible fellow-clerk:

“Anybody in the hotel had a doctor, that you know of?”

“Mr. Graham, my father,” put in Ellen eagerly, “in Room 31. He’s very sick, I think! I must have the doctor Mr. Bardwell called for him,—right away, please!”

“Why, I don’t know what doctor he had. Mr. Bardwell might know.”

“But he’s away!”

“He’ll be back this evening, sometime.”

“Oh, I can’t *wait* till evening! I’ll send for another doctor. My father’s very sick.”

A faint glimmer of the hotel’s instinctive dislike and suspicion of sickness shone in the clerk’s eye, but Ellen did not see it. She went on feverishly:

“Can’t you recommend me to another doctor? A good one?”

The young man changed his cigarette from one hand to the other, and glanced round toward his invisible companion, from whom Ellen had heard the rustle of a newspaper. In her helpless sense of the cold and dreary indifference of this gloomy and terrible place, she added:



“An old doctor. An old, kind, sympathetic, *sentimental* doctor!”

While the two clerks conferred on this, Ellen did some of the sort of thinking which was now habitual with her, and which seemed to have grown out of her old instinct for looking at things through other people's eyes. She compared her case with other, commoner ones, where the pocketbook was thinner than hers, and said to herself with a start:

“This is the deadly chill of the institution! What a lot of this the poor must meet!”

“Well,” the young man was saying over his shoulder to his unseen fellow-clerk, “I'm not very well acquainted here. McDonald, do you know which is the best doctor here? Dr. Abraham—Dr. Corliss—then there's a city doctor up to the other hotel——”

“All doctors look alike to me,” replied the other genially.

“Which is the oldest?” asked Ellen in desperation.

“Abraham, I guess. Is Abraham older than Corliss, McDonald?”

“Gee, I don't know. They're both old geezers.”

“Well, will you please telephone for Dr. Abraham? Wait—I'll do it myself. (He'd play a game of poker before he'd take the trouble to do it),” she thought bitterly.

And then she remonstrated with herself:

“Why, father's just quietly sleeping. I've only been away from him about ten minutes. I don't know why I feel so panicky.”

The telephoning, however, took another ten minutes. Central called the wrong number: the second call was answered, after a long interval, and oft-repeated:

“Did you get them? Did you get them?” by  
“Hello! Yes, hold the wire.”

After a long wait, a lady's voice said:

“Yes, this is Dr. Abraham's house. No, he's out. Any message?—Why yes, I'll tell him as soon as he comes in.”

“Please tell him to hurry!”

She sped back to her father. Some superstitious dread affected her eyesight;—or did he really look worse? He lay quietly enough, with his beautiful thin hands folded over his chest. None of those wincing looks went across his sleeping face. Why, then, did she persistently feel that he looked more ill than before? At last she noticed what it was that had given her that vague increase of anxiety. His chest was rising in very frequent breaths. It did not rise very far. She clutched the footboard of the bed, and having no watch, began to measure his breaths by hers. Three of his to one of hers! Should she not have called Dr. Corliss? And why had she not thought of milk or eggs for him? or would brandy have been better? but she had no brandy. She dared not wake him. And perhaps he had been breathing as fast as this when she went down to the office. When would Jim arrive?

But this was an unnatural sleep. The word “coma” came into her mind. With it came a sort of settling down of her fear and dread, as if they began to make themselves at home in her heart. Her mind cleared. She made a plan. She would not leave him again, not for a thousand doctors. If in half an hour Dr. Abraham did not come, she would ring for the bellboy and call Dr. Corliss.

She sat down, then, and took his fine hand, unclasping it from the other, to hold it quietly pressed hard between her breasts. Sitting thus beside him in silence, with fear, pain, and peace, all strangely mingled, she began to tolerate even the hideous impersonality of the hotel. Her thoughts drifted. She went over the first chapters of "Pendennis" in her mind. She thought of Foker and Major Pendennis meeting in the inn parlor, and smiled. If she had had the book there, she could have read it. The sun in the west window withdrew, hair's-breadth by hair's-breadth, from the tropic reds of the carpet, and a small shadow crept over it: the scrawny shadow of a scrawny tree on the sandy lawn outside. The surf, seeming far and far away, drummed drowsily in her ears.

She guessed by the sun at half an hour. Dr. Abraham had not come. Without relinquishing her father's hand, which she still held against her bosom, she reached and rang the bell. No bellboy came. She rang again and again. No bellboy came. With tightened lips she pressed hard on the bell for a long time without intermission. Fiercely she thought of it ringing and ringing and ringing below. She could almost hear the continuous tinkle far away. At last a bellboy came.

"Ring up Dr. Corliss right away, please, and tell him to hurry and come at once to Room 31 in the Bardwell House," she directed.

Too late, when the bellboy had gone, she thought:

"I should have told him to come back and let me know what Dr. Corliss said. Well, if one of the doctors doesn't come soon, I'll ring again."

Her father stirred and turned toward her. He slightly

moved the hand which she held, but did not withdraw it. At that moment there was a knock, and Ellen called, "Come in," without looking round, she was so confident it was the bellboy returned to tell her when Dr. Corliss had said he would come. But it was not the bellboy. It was Jim.

Jim's one year of medical study had taught him what that look and breathing, and that sort of lassitude and drowsiness meant. What Ellen sensed, and hoped she sensed wrongly, he knew with finality after a long feel of his father's erratic pulse. He silently kissed his sister and said, quite naturally:

"Well, dad, how goes it?"

His father tried to pull the sheet up under his chin, gave up the attempt, and said:

"I believe I'm better, Jim. Do me good—do me good to see you, Jim. I've got Ellen and you here with me. What more do I want? Unless—— Where're your aunts, children? Are they coming in to see me?"

Jim's grave look warned Ellen to control her trembling lips. She controlled them, even in the act of thinking it was impossible to control them, and that the effort to do so would only make her burst out crying. She felt a solemn sense of power in stilling her emotion. She smiled quite easily, and said:

"We're all here, father."

"Little Sarah's not here, and little Tom and Jack aren't here, and your mother's—not——? Is your mother here?"

"Not yet, dad," answered Jim.

He took his father's other hand and held it, with that steady brooding watch on the pulse with which doctors

sometimes seem to accompany the dying into, and beyond, the veil.

It was an hour or two more before the end; and like two dreams, in the interim, the doctors she had telephoned for both came; quiet, kind, and still, talking with Jim and looking kindly and gravely at Ellen where she sat holding her father's hand, as soon as they relinquished it, steadily against her bosom. More vivid than either of these strange, quiet doctors: more vivid than the dreary room, or the ineffably strange afternoon waning over the clouded sky and sea, were the recollections going through her mind, over and over, of days when he and she and Jim had walked round that cove and inlet, on many a summer afternoon like this. Afterward she wondered if the recollections that went through her mind so incessantly throughout those hours, were going through his mind too—reflected from his mind to hers, perhaps. He lay still, breathing rapidly and shallowly, but not coughing, or showing any sign of pain, all the afternoon.

Between four and five o'clock the bathers began coming out of the water, and streamed dripping over the sands, with far-off shouts and pleasantries and gambolings. So had the Grahams gone up over the sands to the bath-houses, cool and salty and refreshed, on how many an afternoon of other summers! And perhaps on one of those afternoons someone's father lay dying in one of those cottages up on the cliff, which looked, with their gardens and verandas, like houses in which no one ever died. Perhaps people watching by their bedsides had heard and seen the bathers' frolicsome return, and been dimly and vaguely wounded by it.

Some of the bathers, after dressing, came up on the hotel veranda, and there were sounds of desultory talk and shouting. Some children were swinging each other in a hammock. Ellen did not hear them, for there were pauses now in the rapid and shallow breath. Thank God, there was no sign of pain in the long thin body so still under the bedclothes. Ellen, on her side of the bed, hung over him, breathlessly watching as if to ward off any unquietness, any troubling of this fortunate, heaven-blessed sleep. Just as an organ-grinder began playing in front of the hotel, he died.

## CHAPTER XIX

### BUSINESS IS BUSINESS

THEY looked over the old brass-bound trunk to repack it, and also over the old gray valise: and Ellen thought of the time when she and Aunt Sallie had brought down Jim's clothes from the skylight room in the boarding-house in New York. This was really not so terrible as that had been. It was true, then, what people said: suspense was worse than the certainty of the worst. Or was it merely that she had grown stronger? In the trunk they found a worn and blackened bit of wood with their father's initials partly carved on it. Ellen remembered, then, a half legendary piece of information out of her childhood: namely that her long-dead uncle, her father's twin brother who had died at sea, had been carving an olive-wood paper-cutter for his twin when brain fever attacked him. Eastward and westward, in this old trunk, twice a year, her father had carried it. They figured out the years: sixty journeys!

In the suitcase it was no surprise to either of them to find the card-photograph of their mother in the Shetland shawl, and the bonnet with morning-glories on it, leaning on the photographer's chair. This was always on their father's bureau, wherever he went, with a small brown Prayer Book, well worn, always lying in front of it.

"Don't you remember, Jim, what father said when he first brought us East to Tory Hill and left us there? that there were only two things he needed to pack to take back with him, that little Prayer Book and that picture of mother?"

Into the extreme tenderness the handling of these things had aroused in her heart, a burning iron scorched and hissed, branding an ineradicable scar.

She had gone down to the hotel office to send a telegram Jim had forgotten, to their Scotch cousins in Toronto. The two young clerks were talking, with their backs toward her, while she reworded the telegram once or twice. Except for herself and the clerks, the office and the lounge beyond it were empty. They could not have seen her, for one said, without any perceptible drop in his voice:

"Let's see, who got the old gentleman's body, Mills or Wilson?"

"Hm—I think Wilson got him."

Ellen went on writing her telegram. She handed it to the young clerk who had asked the question, and received her change back from his hand. The burning in her mind was deep and sickening, but it did not startle her. It only stayed, with devilish perseverance, alongside every other thought, in every act, for several days. It made the homeward journey with her, kept in her mind while she was reading kind, comforting telegrams, when friends met them at the station; and even when Sue Micantoni came up and sat with her. There was one time, the funeral itself, when the summer clergyman, though almost a stranger, came and met the coffin at the foot of the aisle of the little church, and said, walking before it up



the aisle, the tremendous words with which the Burial of the Dead begins:

"I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord,"—then, like a medieval demon exorcised by the sign of the cross, the hideous words went out of her memory. All through the reading of St. Paul's great exposition of death, they stayed away. They could not be heard above that solemn drum-beat:

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

The funeral comforted her deeply and lastingly. That intimation that had frightened her so much in the train, going down to Boston,—those advances that the thought of death had made to her then, half friendly, half familiar—had been as good as their promise. Near by, death was not so terrible: or if still terrible, it was not grisly and ghastly. It was terrible, perhaps, like a thunder-storm, but not like a nightmare. Seen near by, it was seen by daylight. Its face might be pale and worn and solemn, but it was a human face, with eyes and lips. It was not a skeleton.

The horror of those ghoulish words, and the ghoulish picture they called up, of the two undertakers contending for her father's body, lay not in any dishonor they had done, or could do, to him. Partly, no doubt, the insistence and intensity with which she remembered them were due to the fact that she had not been able yet to repeat them to anyone. Sue was the one, of course, to whom she could ultimately tell them. None of the family should ever be subjected to hearing them. But their effect on her was not, after all, personal. She heard them echoing forever in the back of her mind, in the twi-

light where the conscious and the subconscious join, not as a corollary of her father's having died in a seaside hotel, far from home, but as an index to the competitive order in business. Like an anti-strophe sounded after it that harmless seeming maxim, "Competition is the life of trade." After a while, the maxim began to be the answer.

"Who got the old gentleman's body?"

"Competition is the life of trade."

Eventually the burning got well, only leaving that sort of scar to which the blood rushes easily and often. The memory, at last, subsided into that cupboard of her mind where she kept perennially stowed away the fishman's dreadful horse, the laboratory rabbits, Carrie's thousand solitary meals, and the garbage street. There were newspaper items in that cupboard too, about the young colored man in Kentucky who was sent to jail for life for stealing a turkey, and some facts about the neglect of cancerous paupers in county poorhouses, and the sale of New York's old fire-horses for a few dirty dollars in the city treasury. Among all such enormities and brutalities of civilization it was gradually stowed away: and in that grewsome company it did not seem so surpassingly hideous. Still, sometimes, when those other remoter enormities were quiet, nodding on their shelves, this one would make a commotion.

Jim went out to Minneapolis, to the probating of the will. There was altogether about fifteen thousand dollars, and barring a few modest legacies, it was all left to Ellen and Jim. Jim was made sole executor. There was nothing to be done but to pay lawyers and other charges and divide the estate.

Ellen herself knew nothing about investments but the glittering generality "first bond and mortgage." She had lived on an allowance for several years, and understood the value of money as a spendable commodity. Its sources she had never particularly considered, at least in any personal light, even while she read works on economics, beyond a comfortable and justified faith that her father in business dealings never "took advantage" of anybody, "turned sharp corners" or "put on the screws." Now partly on Jim's advice and that of the aunts, but chiefly on her own initiative, she wrote to an old friend of her father's in North Dakota, and asked him to invest her money. He was, she knew from her father's account of him, an able man and an upright one, "so upright that he leaned over backward" as the saying went. At first, when he had replied to her letter with a consent to manage her affairs for her, she had unthinkingly assumed that everything was comfortably settled. Mr. Wilkinson was surely not a man who would ever, any more than her own father, deal hardly or sharply with struggling mortgagees, or take the pound of flesh. On the other hand he would not be lax, but would deal with her money with scrupulous and solicitous care.

But now she discovered, gradually, that unknown to herself, she had been harboring the seeds of a certain faint compunction in her mind, for some time, as regarded the general morality of receiving interest on investments at all. It had perhaps chiefly showed itself as a difference in the pleasure of spending her allowance compared with the pleasure of spending what her verses earned. It was decidedly to her own horror that she now discovered this compunction sprouting in her mind.

Sue couldn't entirely understand about it, and Ellen couldn't explain, beyond saying, "I don't *earn* it! I don't give anything whatever in return for it! It's a present, willing or unwilling, from somebody! It's—it's graft!"

The uneasiness was sprouting slowly until, at Thanksgiving a letter came from the man of business in North Dakota, which seemed to advance it in hot-house fashion.

"I have succeeded," he wrote, "in securing stock for you in a malting company. It pays fairly well: six per cent quarterly. I have put a little, also, in United States Composite, preferred, and some in St. Nicholas Ore. You will receive altogether from these three investments about three hundred and fifty dollars a year. I have not yet placed the rest of your principal, and may not be able to do so with equal safety in equally advantageous stock; but I will advise you later," etc., etc.

"Malting, Composite, and St. Nicholas Ore!" cried Ellen in dismay, dropping the letter on the floor.

"What's the matter with you?" cried Jim, who had come home from the College of Physicians and Surgeons for Thanksgiving, and was going back tonight.

"They're the very last things—the very last!—I would have let my money be put into!"

"What are you talking about? They're gilt-edged," said Jim.

"Malting—breweries! I might as well keep a saloon!" cried Ellen, her dismay increasing. She looked rather white, anyhow, in her black dress, which was also ready-made, and a little loose, and accordingly gave her a fictitious look of having grown thinner.

"Foolishness. They use malt in plenty of other things beside beer."

"Well, then, I'll write and find out what this company uses it for."

"Oh, Ellen, what a queer child you are, sometimes," said Aunt Sallie distressfully. "Why can't you let men manage these things for you? They understand them *so* much better! I don't like to have you so inquisitive, and so—so—so *different* from the way your mother and your Aunt Frances and I were brought up!"

"Aunt Sallie, look and see what men do with my money when I do trust them! Didn't I trust Mr. Wilkinson? Now look—United States Composite! Why, that's where they had the massacre during the strike—where the two children were shot—where they've always fought the union so bitterly——"

"But, Ellen dearie, you must take the world as you find it, you poor child! You can't rearrange everything to suit your ideas of right and wrong!" cried Aunt Fran from the sofa.

"Why, Aunt Fran, I hate having stock in United States Composite even worse than in St. Nicholas Ore, even if St. Nicholas *did* cheat the Government out of three millions!"

"Well!" cried both aunts in a chorus of distress and perplexity; and Aunt Fran went on:

"You won't find *any* business conducted by angels!"

Jim laughed a big, good-natured laugh.

"Well, I think Wilkinson is doing pretty well for you, old lady. Write and tell him to sell, if you want to carry your crotchets as far as that: but I'm afraid he'll

think you're darned ungrateful and pernickety; I know I would, if it was me."

Ellen did write, explaining with great care and full and heartfelt thanks for Mr. Wilkinson's trouble and kindness, how she felt about drawing her income from the liquor trade, a corporation that had the "Templeton Massacre" on its record, and a corporation convicted of perjury and theft. She had already written to the malting company inquiring as to its output, and had received a brief reply stating that the total product went to the brewing trade.

Mr. Wilkinson replied dispassionately that "had he known her views" ("peculiar views," she thought he had begun to write) "he would not have," etc., etc.; as it was, he would try to sell her stock in all three, if he could do so "without disadvantage."

During the winter, however, the quarterly dividends from all three came in; and Mr. Wilkinson, in forwarding them, inclosed a letter saying that he was excessively sorry he had not been able to sell the objectionable stock "without disadvantage."

"Your brother thought of buying the malting stock," he wrote, "but he has now decided not to do so. I am in hopes, however, that he will take the Composite, and part of the St. Nicholas Ore."

So it had been on Jim's shoulders she had been going to unload her dirty money!

After replying in haste that she would rather keep all the stock than sell any of it to her brother, Ellen went off to the sugar woods one March afternoon, to settle, in this particular case, And who was her brother?

It was really fairly clear before she started on her

thinking walk through the melting sponges of the spring snow. The stillness under the brown beeches and leafless white birches in the soggy wet edges of the woods, or the silvery maples in the heart of them, did not help her very much, because she did not need much help. Selling the stock was clearly *not* the way out. It might be a dark and difficult question, what *was* the way out; but it was plainly a poor way to cleanse her own record by bespattering someone else's, however blindly consenting the other might be. And yet it had taken that letter from Mr. Wilkinson to show her that escape in that way would be no escape at all. She laughed at herself rather bitterly to think how like the old rhyme had been her instinct to unload her tainted money on somebody else—*but not on Jim!*

“God bless me and my wife,  
My son and his wife,  
Us four—  
And no more!”

So much was plain; but there must be, then, some other way out. She went down to see the Micantonis again about it.

Sue and her husband, in a frolicsome fit, were dancing a sort of fandango with little David in his checkered rompers, on the small balcony. Ellen saw them afar off, and heard all three singing together as they danced:

“Sur le pont  
D'Avignon  
On le danse,  
On le danse;  
Sur le pont  
D'Avignon,  
On le danse tout au rond!”

It was time for David's nap, and Sue let Ellen carry the little Roman in her arms, and pat and hush him with all that wistful tenderness the feeling of a little body arouses in the single woman's heart. Curious how the sleepy child softly bumping against her shoulder helped to quiet her bother and perplexity—or was it Sue's steadfastly compassionate intelligence which made it seem quietly certain that a way out would be found?

At any rate, Sue had no definite plan to propose. Ellen found, however, that she had really not expected any. She felt in herself a necessity to worry out the answer for herself.

"I believe," she said at length, "that what I wanted you to say, Sue, was just what you've said to me so many times before.—'Think!' I *want* to think. I want to think my own way out."

Sue nodded.

"Steady, plodding, honest thinking," she replied, "is my *deus ex machina*, as you know."

"For once," said Ellen, "I'm not looking for a god from the machine. I *want* to think it out. I want to be like you and David here, and use my own brain. Although," she added candidly, "naturally I pray about it."

"Naturally," said Sue, "seeing it's a problem of applied Christianity."

Her husband had been looking at Ellen thoughtfully. He glanced at Sue, with a wordless question which she seemed invisibly to answer. Then he got up and took a book off the top of the piano.

"Speaking of applied Christianity, here's something," he said, "that Sue and I have been reading lately. It's by a Baptist theological professor. Doesn't sound very



much in our line, but we've found a lot to think about in it. It might just happen to boost your thinking along a little."

"It's boosted David's," cried Sue. "He's going to read about Socialism all summer, he says."

Ellen was looking at the title page.

"Walter Rauschenbusch!" she cried.

"Sure! What do you know about Rauschenbusch?"

"Why, he wrote those fine modern prayers they used to put on the title pages of one of the magazines—don't you remember?"

"No, I never heard of the prayers. Never heard of the man in any connection whatever, until a fellow I knew in Rome sent this out to me the other day."

"Think of living in America and getting a great American book sent out from Rome," cried Sue.

"That's where I score, then, on you two l'arned people," said Ellen. "I've got all the Rauschenbusch Prayers cut out and interleaved in my Prayer-Book."

"Well, do read this book and let us know what you think of it. David and I have been—well! we've been enormously impressed. I may join David in a course of reading on Socialism, though I'm such a free lance, I never could join in a choral creed with a lot of people all claiming to believe just alike. See how different I am from you, Ellen! You always like to be banded together with a crowd of others."

"I do. I like to wear badges, and walk in processions, and be a member of organizations, and wear my heart on my sleeve. Seems to me that's the place for it. You miss a lot of fun, Sue!" Ellen said half-wistfully.

"I feel suffocated in processions, somehow."

"Your beautiful athletic brain wants to be free and have lots of elbow-room to exercise in!"

Sue laughed heartily.

"A lovely poetic way of saying I'm unsocialized."

"'Robust and tender,'" Ellen began to quote her own old verses on Sue.

"'Is her home-grown feeling;  
Swift her espousal  
Of the hindmost's part.'"

She embraced her friend, and then set off up the heavy melting road on foot; it was too early for her bicycle. She was alone, for Sue was going to have another baby in May, and had been exercising enough for one morning. As she walked, she read; she walked past the Oldenbury farm reading, and up the long hill, and over the bridge: forgetting, for the first time, to stop and invite the fragrant memory she could always find there as she passed.

## CHAPTER XX

### CHRISTIANITY IN THE ARENA

LONG ago at Radcliffe, in her salad years, Ellen remembered, she had tried to describe, in a letter to Aunt Sallie, how knocked down and shaken, and yet invigorated, she had felt after reading "Richard Feverel." "It's as if you had been out bathing in a big surf," she had written. This book, "Christianity and the Social Crisis," made her feel in very much the same way.

Or one might say in another figure, it created (or did it find?) a revolutionary feeling in her mind, with a core of clear thought burning beneath it, like the hidden flame beneath billows of lighted smoke.

The book was too exciting to be physically wholesome. She slept poorly, and carried on imaginary conversations, arguments in favor of the thesis of the book, and against the constitution of modern society, half the night. She argued, in these imaginary one-sided debates, with the home people, the summer people, the golfers and tennis-players, the Barnhavens or Willetses, and sometimes with Jim. She fancied their widely varying brands of touched interest, wondering humor, and tolerant contempt for what this fiery Baptist was saying: and she plunged into far more fiery invectives than his against the world as it stood. With passionate partisanship she took his side against all comers. She saw eye to eye

with him the maladjustments and neglects, the warped framework of present society, as he portrayed it; she heard the Gospel speak clearly of all these things with the exact accent he told her in this book to listen for. She saw and felt the poverty his pages described, reading on and on by a late-burning lamp, while all round her lay her own frosty valley along the gleaming Ballantyne, immeasurably peaceful under the March moon, and full of her old friends.

Immeasurably peaceful it looked, but Ellen knew, looking down the valley, that some of the houses were infected with consumption, and some of the farms were hopelessly mortgaged. A valley of good fortune it was not, though the heroic wars of industry were not being fought along the Ballantyne, and the fiercer throat-cutting competition of laborer with laborer was not taking place here. Nor were there in the Green Mountains many of those dreary industrial villages this book told of, which spread like barnacles on the skirts of the normal towns of early America.

"I must read more books than this about Socialism," she often thought, as she read further and further into it.

People said "There are so many different kinds of Socialism. There are Socialists and Socialists." In Buckminster, below Tewkesbury, there lived a certain party leader of the Socialists—a national officer. Ellen just knew his name for a famous one, as such leaders went, and had heard a Tewkesbury man say once that he would walk to Buckminster in a hail-storm to hear William Horn speak. On the strength of this she wrote to William Horn, and asked him simply "What was So-

cialism?" He answered in a long typewritten letter. Socialism was a social hope, a theory of history, and a political plan, he said: the plan was based on the historical theory, and the social hope was based on the plan. Had she read Edmond Kelly, for example? Had she read John Spargo? Had she read Morris Hillquit? He closed by saying, "I am subscribing for you for a month to *The Party* and sending you the *Communist Manifesto*."

Ellen found the *Manifesto* a little shrill, and also a little obvious, considering its great fame. She did not stop to consider that perhaps it had achieved its own obviousness, like a proverb. *The Party* was a New York daily. It was printed on a poor quality of paper, with poor type. It was able and keen, though bitter and harping—intolerably bitter! "Bigoted," she called them, carrying down a sheaf to show the Micantonis. Sue shook her head a little over them: her husband smoked and considered.

"We can't help," he said, "drawing a certain distinction between what's allowable to the under dog and what's allowable to the upper. Our sympathies may be all with the under dog, but we don't want him to be *too* punctilious about his rights. We want him to be comfortable, we want him stood up for, but we can't quite stand his crude dander and his grotesque self-assurance when he stands up for himself. At least, I find that notion lurking in the dregs of *my* mind; every now and then I kick it out, but it sneaks back."

Ellen was listening rather eagerly.

"I guess I know what you mean, David," she said. "For instance, one employer doesn't mind saying to an-

other employer, 'I think you pay altogether too high wages;' but she's very indignant if another maid says to her maid, 'I think you work altogether too long hours.' "

Sue laughed.

" 'What's sauce for the goose is saucy for the gander,' " she quoted.

" The thing that's difficult for you, and I confess for me too, Ellen, to realize," said David, " is that we're tarred with the same brush."

" Perhaps we are. At any rate, I confess I shall really be glad when *The Party* stops coming. I declare I hate the idea of Aunt Fran or Aunt Sallie getting hold of it. They'd feel as if they'd touched a bomb."

" They *would* have touched a bomb!" said David Micantoni, his deep-set eyes burning.

" We-ell, I don't know that a little sincere bitterness and bigotry would shock me so much as they do you, Ellen dear," said Sue. " I more pity bitterness for being weak and babyish, than I dread or hate it."

" They have a column in *The Party* every day," Ellen went on, " called 'Labor's Dividends.' In it they put every accident that happens in a factory or mine or shop, where workmen are hurt or killed,—every such accident that they can find in the day's news. There's concentrated bitterness for you!"

This much was cleared in Ellen's thinking, at any rate: that if these Socialists could persuade her to their view, the problem about the dividends from the objectionable Composite, St. Nicholas, and malting stock would be solved. They could be turned into the party funds and made to dig their own graves.

Well! but suppose these Socialists, with their bigoted,

one-idea'd press, *couldn't* convert her? Wasn't the problem about the dividends equally solved, though less satisfactorily? The malting stock dividends could be turned into the Anti-Saloon League, the St. Nicholas and Composite into co-operative ventures, or union funds, or workman's benefit societies, or, one remove less satisfactory, but vitally useful, into housing associations, legal aid, child labor reform,—or the Fresh Air Fund, or St. John's Floating Hospital, or School Gardens. Didn't Dr. Rauschenbusch himself say that unmarried women should adopt the whole rising generation to love and work for?

She looked that night at the chapter of Isaiah where she kept Franklin Tallman's last letter. She read it, with new understanding, from "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear," to "Great shall be the peace of thy children."

The first practical step toward either alternative was to pare down her personal expenses to the uttermost farthing. It could be begun at once: every item for clothing, for example, could be carefully scanned and cut as low as possible; and all the nameless "sundries" which began with soda and ended with calling-cards could be cut out, to the tune of ten to twenty dollars a year; a sum that would circulate propaganda among hundreds of people. Economy for a great end, transcending illimitably the mere replenishing of one's own bank account, became an exciting adventure. There was an exhilarating piquancy in the notion of steadily returning this loot to its enemies.

But she told Sue and David, the next time she went down there, that she didn't think she could ever be a Socialist, much as she liked their ideas about profit, dividends, and capital.

"Do you know, Sue, I discovered the other day,—I wonder if David's come across it in his reading?—that you've got to take a pledge, if you join their party, not to vote for any other party's candidate, on any consideration?"

"It suffocates me to think of it!" cried Sue. "You don't catch me signing any such pledge! Not in a thousand years!"

"Yes, I've heard of it," said David, in his most ruminative voice, and that slightly meticulous pronunciation, even when using slang, which was, or seemed to Ellen's familiar ears, all that was left of his Italian accent. "It sounds a large order to me, too. I'm in process of making up my mind about it. I suspect when, or if, I'm ever ready to embrace the rest of their doctrines, I shall be ready to swallow that pledge. The idea must be that partial reforms will come all the quicker without Socialist votes, because Socialist votes reach out so far beyond partial reforms. You know the Socialists claim they stimulate a crowd of non-Socialist reformers to hurry through the half-measures; whereas they say, 'If we radicals content ourselves with conservative concessions, conservative concessions will soon begin to dwindle.'"

"David, I believe you'll join 'em!"

"It'll be a neck-and-neck race between us, then," said David, looking shrewdly at Ellen.

Ellen shook her head.

"There's one thing I *do* like," Sue said, "and that is the system of regular dues David was telling me about. It sounds much wholesomer than depending on gifts, like the other parties. I like the way party policies are



adopted, too, by written votes of the whole membership, with plenty of time allowed for thinking it over. They're getting splendid practice for the initiative and referendum, to say nothing of woman suffrage. All the same, nothing would induce me to sign that pledge."

. . . . .

"What bothers me more now, Sue, than that pledge," said Ellen a few weeks later, "is this inhuman doctrine of the class struggle."

"David swallows that whole," said Sue. "He says he's seen it all his life,—says he's tired of the newspapers treating every strike as if it were a separate thing, instead of another battle in a long war. David and I intend, some time, to run a newspaper ourselves. We'll sink all our savings, I can forewarn you now, trying to print news in the order of its real importance."

"Hope you'll take me on as a reporter!"

"We will, won't we, David?"

Oh dear, how long ago it seemed—and was—that Sunday of the unforgotten walk, the night of Sue's and David's engagement, and of her own one and last good-by to Franklin Tallman! Sometimes the flight of time came over her, suddenly, like this, with some obscure feeling of homesickness for the past which was swirling and weltering into the distance, like landscape past a railway train! An instant covered the experience: and then the feeling was gone. It had been brought on in this case, or seemed to have been, simply by observing that David seemed a thought stouter this spring, and had been growing side-whiskers, like a mid-Victorian Englishman.

"I believe I'll give up reading and talking about Socialism, for the rest of the spring, anyway. Did I tell you, Sue?—Aunt Fran's pretty well now, and if Cousin Celia Oldenbury can come up and stay a week with her, Aunt Sallie and I are going down to New York to see Jim."

"What's the matter with Jim?"

"Why, nothing's the matter. Only he's taking three sets of examinations at once; hospital, State, and Medical School; he graduates at P. and S. this year, you know. If he 'makes' a hospital, as he calls it, he won't be home at all this summer. And we've all three got it into our heads—Aunt Fran particularly—that he must be a little fagged and worn. We're going to take down some tarts and wild cranberry jelly and maple sugar, and darn his socks, and see how he is, and so forth. Perhaps we'll each buy a summer hat at the same time."

"Summer hats are no anodyne for Ellen, and darning Jim's socks won't settle her mind," said David Micantoni to his wife, as Ellen biked away up the muddy April road. "Bon voyage, Ellen! Just take the *Fabian Essays* along to read on the train."

"Class struggle, indeed," he muttered as he and Sue went their evening rounds to feed their few head of stock. "Just let her live among mills awhile, and see the silk and textile strikes, foolish woman that she is. Class struggle—why, it's the A. B. C. of the whole thing."

"It doesn't seem so to Ellen," his wife replied. "She can't endure the preaching of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness."

"It doesn't have to be preached, you see; and then

again, it can't be preached away, or sent to Coventry."

"Well, Ellen's going to cut out the economics for awhile, anyway," persisted Sue, "and write some saleable verses."

"She'll never sell many verses again, my dear. She's headed for another port."

Cousin Celia Oldenbury did come up to stay with Miss Frances Mowbray, and Ellen and her Aunt Sallie did go down to their usual boarding-place in one of the Twenty Streets east of Madison Square. It was near the hospital Jim was hoping to "make"; and they were to visit the hospital with him, on some afternoon of their stay. The city, and above all, Madison Square, looked beautiful—overhead. The fountain played, too, over the red and yellow tulips arranged round it: the trees were all leafing, and the blue and green were dazzlingly mingled. There had been, however, the usual amount of unemployment all winter. The charitable organizations' appeals had let up a little, now that the winter was over and the overcoatless no longer had the bitter cold to contend with as they stood in the bread lines. But the bread lines themselves were still long, as Ellen noticed, crossing Fourteenth Street late one afternoon. The benches in the Square were largely filled with slack and frowsy unemployed, whose desperate neglected sufferings all winter seemed to have burned out their manhood and left husks of men.

Did some of them sit in the Square all night, Ellen wondered? Otherwise how did that whitish-leathery-faced young man in the sleazy blue serge suit, so badly bagged at the knees, keep always that same place on the westernmost bench by the fountain?

Spring had come, of course, and in the middle of the

day it was almost seventy degrees, but the evenings were cool, and the nights, especially if damp, must be quite cold. Particularly so, she reflected, to anybody with a stomach empty of food, and a heart empty of anticipation. Thus the pale-leathery young man by the fountain looked, at first. And yet, when you came closer, there was a fixed concentration in his eyes. Ellen rather studied him, for some reason: perhaps because he was always there, and then *The Party*, which she was getting into the habit of buying at news-stands, had so much more to say about the unemployed than the *Censor*, for instance. She thought there was a gleam of purpose away back in his eyes. He must be living and hoping still for something; something not altogether for himself, perhaps. On the third or fourth day that she saw him there, she inclined her head in a scarcely perceptible bow to him as she passed. He also bowed slightly, gravely, but did not take off his hat. If he had taken off his hat he might have seemed familiar. But that grave, slight bow was exactly like her own.—On each side of him sat older and more frowsy men, whom Ellen pitied more than she pitied him. If life were intending to befriend them, to cease badgering them and wasting them, it would better be quick. They were ageing a year a week, or faster, she judged, in this mockingly sweet and pleasant weather.

On the last morning of their stay, her aunt went up-town to lunch with a friend in one of the Fifty Streets. Ellen had executed a commission or two from Tory Hill friends, and on her way home from the shops, strolled through the Square. Outwardly she took pains to stroll: but at heart she intended to walk up to the fountain and

make acquaintance, if possible, with the strange man with the strange complexion. But for the first time he was not there.

Disappointed in her quixotic scheme, and feeling the hour or so before the time when Jim was to come and take them over the hospital lengthening out rather tediously, she wandered over to the curb at the southeastern corner of the Square, where a street orator, as usual, was holding forth. She had never stopped here before to listen: but with a half hope that the curb orator would prove interesting, since perhaps the pale-brown man had left his bench to come and hear, she now lingered, worming her way, as listeners came and went, a little nearer the soap-box, until at last she began to hear what the thin, flushed old man, gesticulating so wildly, was saying.

"The churches are nothing but Sunday clubs!"

"That's true," called out a scarred, undersized young man near Ellen.

"Christians send you to hell for not believing their dogmas!"

"What Christians?" Ellen called out boldly.

"Who's that? Lady, what did you say?"

"I say, what Christians condemn people to hell for not believing their dogmas?"

"Lady, I'll answer all the questions you want to ask, if you'll wait till I'm finished. I'm not going to talk very long."

"Lady, take my advice and get out of here," a middle-aged man in the crowd addressed Ellen. "You'll be getting in bad if you stay."

"But if I go, he'll think I was afraid to stay."

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"The authorities oughtn't to allow them talking such blasphemy here," he said.

"Well," said Ellen, "I haven't heard him say anything really blasphemous."

"Sh! Sh!" came in little spurts all around them.

The speaker went on. He ridiculed, with taunts and innuendo, the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, and other sections of the Creed. His face was aflame with a bitter but selfless passion. It crossed Ellen's mind that he might have been a martyr of the Reformation; that just so in Tudor England might a crowd have listened to an English Luther.

He went on and on. It was lunch time at the boarding-house. Ellen was not hungry. Only Jim had said not to come to the hospital without "a good meal aboard." The dining-room would be open only half an hour. The half-hour was almost over. The speaker had put on an expression of hypocritical sanctity, and was singing through his nose what he called a "hymn." He said it was exactly what these "Sunday clubs" thought and felt in their hearts.

"We're the select and chosen few:  
Let all the rest be damned.  
There's room enough in hell for you:  
We can't have heaven crammed!"

Ellen made a hasty calculation. Jim was coming at two. She must go. She held up her hand and wagged it at the speaker.

"Can't you answer my question before I go? I've got to go now."

"Wait, lady, till I finish, and I'll answer all the questions you like."

“Well then,” said Ellen in a lower voice, turning and addressing the half-dozen men who stood nearest, “I’ll just say to *you* what I wanted to say to him. There are all kinds of Christians. Some of them are just like what he says they are. Others are only half as stupid, lazy, and mean as he says; and others—others—why, some live and die to save the sick, and some to save drunkards, and some to save women; and some are leaders in the Socialist party, fighting for justice and freedom!” Her voice, as usual in excitement, had lifted treacherously fast, and many in the crowd were listening. Ellen felt them facing toward her, and swept their faces with a glance; she saw many of those pale whitey-brown complexions, like her unknown friend on the bench; faces that looked as if this were perhaps the first time, for months, that they had been out in the open air, or felt the sun on their pores. “Did you ever hear of Vida D. Scudder?” she went on. (“Yes, I have,” replied a man. “She writes in the *Sunday Party*.”) “She’s a Christian, and a church member! Did you ever hear of Rauschenbusch?”

“Yes, I’ve heard him in Cooper Union,” said a voice.

“Well—he’s a *minister*!”

“Is that right, lady? Is that straight?” a weary, shabby man asked with sincere wonder. “Is that straight?” asked another: and all round her rose an incredulous murmur, from pale, shabby men.

“What’s the lady saying over there?” the speaker paused to inquire. His audience had partly turned away from him. “The lady must be saying *she’s* a good Christian. She thinks she’s a *fine* Christian!”

“No! No! The poorest! The poorest!” cried Ellen fiercely.

Perhaps he would answer her question now. But no, he was selling literature. He held up pamphlets and weeklies, reeling off their tables of contents. It was a pity, Ellen thought, she had no money left. She would have bought some.

Well, she must go. She softly pushed her way through the men who had listened to her. But at the edge she turned and, unable to restrain herself, cried out again:

“And who killed Jesus, and why? The rich! for standing up for the poor!”

They closed in behind her, many staring after her with the same heavy wonder, and dim, incredulous surprise; and the words came into her head:

“Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship——”



## CHAPTER XXI

### THE CALL TO THE COLORS

THE doors of the dining-room at the boarding-house were closing; the colored waiter was actually pushing them together, when Ellen entered. "Could I get a bite of lunch, do you think, Williams?" "Sure you could, Miss Graham!" "Anything, Williams,—if I could have an egg and a bit of bread and butter." With friendly haste he brought her a poached egg and a glass of milk. She bolted them with dismayed looks at her watch: and yet, when she had gone upstairs and begun to change her crumpled old suit (three years old) for her new one (two years old) such a press of thoughts surged against the feeble barriers she tried to keep them down with, that she paused for whole minutes, her blouse half on, half off.

"After I finish this one more book on Socialism, I'll get out of economics," she resolved. "Perhaps my verses'll be all the better. Of course my immediate business in life is to earn enough by sunbonnets to enable me to turn over all my malting, Composite, and St. Nicholas dividends to temperance and social work. I'd better let economics alone, now I've thought out my immediate problem about the unfumigated stock."

Sunbonnets had been easy enough to write two years ago,—one year—nine months ago. Her head had been

full of them then. But would they come back whenever she whistled, silly verses though they were?

At times like this, it seemed very unlikely. The allure was gone. Whenever, in the past nine months, she had dug out of her listless imagination a few notions for sun-bonnets, they had presented themselves baldly and obviously, without any of the delicacies and individualities that had enabled her to assign vaguely symbolic names to them in the early days;—without any of the tender paradox and embryonic humor that once had adorned them. Gone were all their “beautiful obliquities”; shorn of which, their underlying ideas looked painfully hackneyed.

Was it more or less violent self-deception to try to think she could go back to them again, at will, half-heartedly? Her return would be half-hearted, could not be otherwise, now that she had had this other bee of justice buzzing in her head. To think herself back into those wistful quaint verses would be very hard indeed.

“Still I shall do it in time, even if eventually, as I suspect, I go into the Socialist party,” she concluded, spasmodically hurrying as she glanced at the clock, and saw that Jim and Aunt Sallie were both overdue. Or could Aunt Sallie be down in her room waiting?

“There! It’s drizzling, and it the first day of May!” she thought. The air began to come in rather raw and shivery at her window. The sidewalks were rapidly getting a thin mush of wet dust spread out over them, and the brewery horses going by steamed into the graying air. The greenness of the Square was slightly veiled by the drizzle and damp. Over there, beyond the fountain, was the pale-leather-faced young man sitting in his sleazy serge suit, that would soon reek wet all over him?

What immediate message, after all, to this man and his neighbors on the benches, had Dr. Rauschenbusch, or Spargo and Arner, or any other of the writers she had been reading so much of late? It was so far away,—supposing them right—that majority of Socialist votes, that Socialist Congress and President, those Socialist legislatures! If the young man's lungs were the least bit weak, he'd be dead long before then, sitting on that bench in the drizzling rain, with his lean, fixed face. He had taken hold of her imagination, that young man: he was assuming statuesque proportions, as of a Type. The type of the brothers in the garbage street! of whom a certain number would have pneumonia, and out of those a certain number would drift, through undernourishment and poor air, into tuberculosis. . . .

Why should she think so persistently of him, she wondered, when the Square was full of older men, thin old men, stooping like her father? Old men, with young, unreconciled eyes: old men with old eyes: middle-aged men, dingy, heavy; and plenty of other young men, beside this one: young men of about Jim's age: perhaps some of them would have liked to be doctors, too: perhaps some of them would have found the cause and cure of cancer. Ah, well! Socialism was pretty slow. But perhaps it was slow because people kept on writing what would sell, instead of embracing it at once and chucking everything for propaganda. And if it meant what it said, Togetherness, could not all the people who believed in it perhaps get together, meanwhile, to befriend each other and outsiders, and show them what it really meant to say "E Pluribus Unum," and "United We Stand"?

Well, here was Jim, with that half-English look a rain-

coat always gave him: Jim, with his clear, thin, shaven, professional face and beautiful, fine, professional hands. He was ready, Aunt Sallie was ready, her fresh veil trim and taut, her trim gloves buttoned. What had Ellen been doing, that she hadn't come down and waited in the parlor? Ellen, dismayed and abashed, plunged about the room hunting up her rubbers; and presently was ready, with that loosish look about the waist she always had (before it was the fashion for clothes to look loose); her broad rubbers on over her broad-toed, low-heeled shoes, and her thrice-trimmed, thrice-wintered hat a little over one ear. Jim looked at her, a disparaging look.

"My family are such swells," she apologized.

"Swells nothing," Jim answered, with a friendly enough grin. "The only thing is, old lady, your turn-over collar's off the band; one end of it sticks out."

"Well—I pinned it in. My only motto is, Things may be pinned, but they must be clean."

"What are these people waiting for along the curbs?" asked Aunt Sallie as they crossed Third Avenue. "Seems to me they might have chosen a pleasanter day for loitering on the sidewalks."

"They're waiting for the May Day parade," said Jim.

"What! a children's parade? Oh, I'd like to see it!"

"Children, Lord, no. There may be some children in it, but the first of May's the international Labor Day, you know, Aunt Sal."

"Oh, I knew, but I'd forgotten!" cried Ellen; while her aunt went on in some perplexity:

"Labor Day—I thought it came in September."

"Ours does, but the general Labor Day all over the world's the first of May," Ellen joined Jim in explaining.

"How can they parade, though, if it isn't a legal holiday? Why don't they have to work?" persisted Aunt Sallie.

"They do have to work: only they don't work. They just take a holiday,—that's all. It's nothing much to see, you know," added Jim. "They don't keep step, or carry much in the way of banners. Most of 'em look too tired to tramp so far. They just walk along."

"I'd like to watch it!" cried Ellen. "It must be fine."

"Well, maybe there's something fine in it, but it seems sort of disappointing to me," said Jim. "There's nothing much *to* it. As I say, they just walk."

"But there must be some purpose or ideal in their minds,—some feeling of solidarity, at any rate. Togetherness," she added, half to herself.

"I thought that'd get a rise out of the old lady," said her brother indulgently. "Well, there's the hospital, on the right. See?—the iron railings."

"They must have some idea of a world where people will hang together and neighbor better than they do now," pursued Ellen, not looking where she was going, and stumbling up the semi-circular steps with the iron railing.

"Oh well, perhaps. This is the visitor's entrance. Here's the elevator. We'll go through the surgical wards first. Here's where I hope I'll be an interne this fall. If I can't make the surgical, I'll be content to get into the medical wards."

They saw an old woman whose arm had been caught in a wheel, and a young girl, with baby-blue eyes, whose scalp had been torn off in a machine. Ellen looked at every patient's eyes as they passed. She tried with quiet

passion to put a little plank of friendship across to them. But few answering glances kindled. Life in this white, barren, cleanly place seemed to be a tough fabric of endurance mostly. A few in wheel chairs were talking, and one or two were sewing, which lent a touch of welcome homeliness to the monotonous ranges of beds.

In the men's surgical ward were the usual number (smaller than in the women's ward) of convalescents after operation. It was at the very end that a swathed and shrouded figure, with only the eyes showing, made Ellen cringe and ask what was his malady. Jim inquired and discovered that it was a man who had been boiled. He had fallen into a vat in chemical works: most of his flesh had fallen, like soup meat, from his bones.

Ellen remembered the column she had so disliked in *The Party*, the column headed "Labor's Dividends." There one had read daily, for a month, in the light of the editor's bitter caption, of many such accidents as these, scalps torn off, arms torn out, men boiled alive.

"Yes," Jim was saying, "I hope I'll make the surgical side. And yet the medical wards are nearly as good."

"Good, Jim!"

"I knew you'd ask me if doctors and nurses get cynical! Sooner or later you were bound to, old lady. Aunt Sal looks shocked, too. I'm sorry either of you saw that man, poor fellow, that fell into the vat. But see here! he isn't suffering. He won't live long: but he won't suffer. If he weren't scalded so badly, he'd suffer far more.

"Most people are scandalized when they hear stories about young hospital doctors joking about the dead-house and the cadavers, and so forth; but don't ever let any-

body make you think, Ellen, that those fellows give anything but their best care and thought to the ward patients. Surrounded as they are all the time by pain and sickness and death, they'd go bug-house if they didn't lighten it up all they could. Goodness knows I've been in a hospital only a week or two, on ambulance duty and things like that; but I can see what the strain is. It's fierce!"

"It must be. If I were a ward patient here I'd trust any of the young doctors that hadn't been doing any vivisection: I wouldn't care to be handled by those that had."

"Oh, well, vivisection has its abuses, and I'd like to see 'em corrected; but it's come to stay, I guess."

"Why, Jim, if the doctors that send delegations to legislatures to fight us would only send delegations to get machinery fenced in, that girl with her scalp gone and that scalded man wouldn't be here!"

"There's something in that, too," said Jim. "The doctors might do a lot more, collectively, by moral pressure, for social reforms. They could put a big crimp in child labor and night work for women and dark sleeping-rooms in tenements, for instance: that would be a little more in their line perhaps, than fencing in machinery. But don't forget that they couldn't very well do more for poor devils individually than they do. Why, if a shoemaker or a clothier were asked to make his prices what the customer could pay, just because his feet would freeze, or he'd catch pneumonia, otherwise, why! the man would laugh in your face!"

They had come into the medical ward, and there was a desperate case of the "bends" two or three doctors and

nurses were working over. "A worker in the harbor," said Jim. "Think of fellows being willing to do such risky work as that for the wages they get!"

"Think of anybody being willing to hire them to do such risky work, and pay them such small wages!" cried Ellen.

"Well, it's an instance of caveat labor—let the workman beware. Now here's another; here's a case of phossy jaw. You know what *that* is, Ellen? You've read the muck-rake magazines."

"I haven't—I never read muck-rake magazines," confessed Aunt Sallie. "What is it?"

"Why, the stuff they used to dip the matches into, in certain match factories, got on their hands. They're careless, I suppose, poor devils; and then they put their fingers in their mouths, or handle something they're going to eat; and then the jaw gradually rots away. But now the law has stepped in and protected them; most of these cases date back to the old times,—that is a year or two ago. It used to be very common among match-workers."

"Don't tell us any more! Poor creatures!" cried Aunt Sallie, shivering.

Ellen walked along in silence, thinking again and again, with staring eyes, "Labor's Dividends—Labor's Dividends!"

When they came out into the street again, the drizzle was transiently holding up. The crowds along Second and Third Avenues had thickened a good deal. At first they could not get across Third Avenue. The parade was passing.

"Ladies' Garment Workers," read a small paper



transparency carried by two pale, small men in black suits. "The Times Are Hard Because the People Are Soft."

Two young girls with red sashes carried a paper trough along the curb, into which Ellen saw a few dimes drop. It was labeled:

"Help the Fur Strikers."

A red banner with gold fringe was printed in Polish, and back of that another transparency was borne along, with its motto in letters half Greek, half Hebrew in form.

These were the Ukrainian and Lithuanian Song Societies.

A band preceded the Painters', Paperers', and Plasterers' Union. It was playing the Marseillaise. Over the drum was perilously poised another of the favorite white transparencies. It read:

"Be Thrifty! Give Up Having Millionaires."

Ellen clapped. Jim said:

"I wouldn't make myself conspicuous, Ellen."

"Here! The policeman's letting people go across," Aunt Sallie exclaimed. "Come on, Ellen!" She took Jim's arm.

Ellen said:

"You and Jim go along, but I'll just stand here and watch it a little longer, Aunt Sallie. I think it's very interesting."

"Oh dear—well! Be back in time for dinner. Remember your packing. Here—you keep the umbrella."

"Sure! I'll remember. Jim, I won't say good-by. You're coming to see us off?"

They were gone, and Ellen was left alone amid the silent, watching crowd along the curb.

“The Only Way To Get Something For Nothing Is To Take It From Somebody Else,”

read a broad transparency carried by Local New York.

Ellen clapped again, with a grave face thinking of her income.

“Pretty good, comrade.”

Was this strange man in the crowd addressing her? But he wasn't altogether strange, after all. It was the pale-leather-faced young man from Madison Square, from the bench beside the fountain.

“I didn't know you was one of us,” he went on.

“I'm not—I'm sorry to say.”

“Aren't you a Socialist?”

“No. I've been reading a good deal about Socialism, though,” she added. “I like a good many things about it—more than like them!”

“What *don't* you like about it?”

“Well! I don't like the bitterness.”

He looked her slowly, thoughtfully—not insultingly—up and down.

“You don't see anything to be bitter about, hey?”

“Oh yes, indeed I do! I've been in a hospital this afternoon.” She told what she had seen there.

“And still you don't understand the bitterness?”

“Oh yes, yes! I understand it *well*! But I don't like it.”

“Don't you suppose the soldiers at Valley Forge were bitter? But I suppose you'd have stood by 'em, and knitted mufflers for 'em?”

Ellen thought this over, forgetful of the parade.

“You're perfectly right,” she said at length. “I'm in

other things where my colleagues are bitter. Come to think of it, there's bitterness in a good many controversies. Why, even Bacon and Shakespere!"

After she had said this, she was sorry. She thought he would not know anything about Bacon and Shakespere. But perhaps he did, for he smiled understandingly.

"For that matter," he said, "I've heard people almost come to blows over whether something happened on Tuesday or Wednesday."

Ellen was following a train of thought of her own. She was thinking too intently to notice the banners and devices going by, or to do more than sense, in a vague way, the stream itself of men and women. She was, however, dimly aware, even in the ferment of her new estimates which had instantly to be rearranged, had to be reconciled with the old ones, or else to oust them: in all this inner tumult she was aware, in a dim way, how undersized and pinched many of these people were, how wearily, as well as out of step, they walked. More clearly and impressively the gallantry and fervor of the march itself came home to her. That such tired, pale people should march at all, that these crowds of quiet watchers should stand under the uncertain sky, on the sloppy pavements, to see them pass, began to illuminate her mind. Where there was such a deeply burrowing fire, there would be some acrid, smarting smoke.

A boy passed, selling banners and badges, and she bought a banner for ten cents. It was of red baize, with the design stamped rather crudely on it, of two hands clasping across the map of the world, and round the whole the legend:

"Workers of the World, Unite!"

There came a small band of young women, in dark-blue dresses with red sashes, singing something. It was something rather lively and challenging. By listening intently, and fixing her eyes on the lips of the foremost, who seemed their captain, Ellen was able to make out the words of the song:

"Do you complain who feed the world,  
And clothe the world,  
And house the world?"

(Fine! Fine how they held up their heads, and walked, for a wonder, in step.)

"Do you complain who *are* the world  
Of what the world may do?  
As from this hour you use your power,  
The world shall follow you!"

Ellen remembered that song of Mrs. Gilman's, and smiled to herself, thinking of her own pleading sunbonnets, and then of such militant songs of labor as this, fit to be sung by these fervent young workingwomen! Far up the street she heard still the challenging rise of their voices, perfectly clear and joyous, with the effect of sunshine, somehow, under the leaden sky:

"Do you complain who *are* the world,  
Of what the world may do?"

This song and those joyous young militants woke Ellen up. She became aware of the paper trough passing close beside her again, with its legend, "Help the Fur Strikers." It was the third or fourth one that had thus passed.

"You think strikers are right sometimes, don't you, my good woman, bitterness or no bitterness?" suddenly inquired the benchman next her. It struck Ellen as very

queer and amusing, to be called "good woman," like a workingwoman. Then she was flamingly ashamed to have noticed or thought of such a thing, and especially in the face of this parade. She answered quickly:

"Yes! Often and often I think they're right."

"Did you ever contribute anything to help 'em?"

"Why, no—not that I remember." Contribute to a strike! Who ever heard of such a thing? Why, nobody contributed to a strike—nobody but the workers. Moral support was all the general public gave, to a strike it approved of . . .

"You better help the fur workers, then, in their strike," said her neighbor quietly. "They'll need a little help—especially those that have been breathing fur fluff into their lungs the longest."

Ellen had a foolish little purse in her glove. She had been very economical, trying not to touch for personal expenses any of the malting, Composite, or St. Nicholas money. She wished she had some of that money with her now. She emptied, however, the little purse into her hand. Dimes, nickels, and quarters—it only made ninety-five cents altogether. Would that she dared to offer the two quarters to the bencher next her! But he looked miles above them; or so she thought; perhaps mistakenly. Well, such as it was, she would drop it all in the next paper trough. To show that it was all she had, she dropped it purse and all. One of the young girls carrying the trough looked up and saw Ellen's red banner. She smiled and said:

"Thanks, comrade."

Ellen felt her breast rise with a wave of sudden feeling. What was it? What urge and thrill within her

answered to the word the bencher first, and now this unknown girl, had used?

The parade apparently was nearly over. There was something coming at the end, however, which aroused spasmodic cheering along the sidewalk. Bursts of cheering greeted it; by fits and starts they seemed to come. It was not a band. There was nothing in it like a uniform. It seemed to keep even worse step and time than the rest of the parade had done. It looked, in fact, at the distance of a block or two, a mere horde of straggling people, trailing along behind the regular procession—a medley and motley throng, and a small throng at that.

At half a block's distance Ellen could read the one banner which was borne teeteringly in the midst of the nondescript little crowd. It was stretched taut between two poles, and on a red ground, in large white letters, exclaimed:

“Recruits! To the Colors!”

What caused the spasms of cheering, then, must be these occasional recruits from the sidewalk who plunged into the parade. Evidently there had been a number of such impulsive accretions. The excitement was rather contagious. Ellen saw an old man swing off his hat and plunge over the curb, marching stiffly, rheumatically, yet jauntily. She joined in the cheers which greeted him; and suddenly an intense envy of him possessed her. She wished it were herself whom those other marchers were reaching over to shake hands with, calling, “Welcome, comrade!” She wished she were that old rheumatic man.

“Will you march?”

It was the bencher, still standing next her, who was speaking. Looking round at him, she saw that deep-lying spark in his eyes again, which she had seen, or had thought she saw, in the Square. But the blood beat in her wrists and temples so loudly that she could hardly hear or see.

"Will you march—comrade?"

He put out his hand.

Ellen took it.

"Yes!"

"Hurrah! Welcome, comrades!"

Now they were reaching over and shaking hands with her, and with the bencher who walked beside her. The cheering on the sidewalk redoubled, quadrupled. Ellen lifted her banner and waved it. At the sight of the clasping hands pictured on it, the workers all cheered again. In all the flooding feeling of that moment she was most clearly aware, not of the shouts themselves, or the press of comrades round her, but that the bencher with whom she walked had a faint color at last in his powdery-leather cheeks; and that she herself felt that strange tingle, all along the arm that carried her banner, which she had felt years ago, in the hand that Franklin Tallman had touched.

*"As far beyond this, perhaps, as this is beyond the blue sky,"*

her own forecast of the future, in that vanished, enchanted August six years ago, came back to her now.

She held the banner so that the slight breeze blew it straight across her breast. She walked with the bencher, they two alone together. The same sexless fervor

which she felt, she saw in his pinched face, in the faces of the men behind them, of the occasional women who marched. She heard it in the shouts that greeted others coming down from the sidewalk into the parade. Most of all it showed in the very young girls with the red sashes who carried the paper troughs. It was wonderful to Ellen to look at their faces. Seldom was there any color in them, but they were sometimes very pretty, round-cheeked and delicate and youthful. Only there was no more conscious sex in them than in the faces of children, or of the very old.

She did not know at all where she walked. She was not aware of any turnings, or crossings, or policemen. She was not aware of the lapse of time, or the coming on again of the drizzle. She had forgotten almost her identity. When all was over she found herself alone in Union Square, in the midst of a smart shower. A few speakers were addressing fragments of the diminished crowd, from scattered boxes and carts. Splashes of rain on her cheeks at length awoke her to the necessity for getting home, and the fact that she had an umbrella and would better hoist it. Suddenly she realized that her marching companion was gone. No—there he was, crossing the Square toward Broadway. He was going back to his bench! She had not even his name, and he had not hers! She had not asked him to let her help him, comradelike, with the price of a night's lodging. While she thought these things, dismayed and reproachful, she was running, dodging through the remnants of the crowd, through the torn wet papers on the grass, the huckstering boys with badges still soliciting trade. She ran after the bencher, losing sight of him again and



again. With so many obstacles and delays she was not gaining on him. She was losing distance.

But he turned round and saw her, and waved his hat. She motioned violently, beckoned imperiously to him to come back. At least he should share her umbrella. He shook his head, waved his hat again, and quickened his pace. Through the rain, the branches, the crowds, and the beginning of dusk, she could no longer discern him.

Well, it would be the same thing to share her umbrella with any of these men and women with whom she had marched. She offered to share it with an elderly man who was starting alongside her up Fourth Avenue, and who wore the red button. He accepted with grave thanks, and held it himself over the two. They walked in companionable silence. Ellen did not try to hold up her skirts. She preferred to hold her banner still across her bosom, where passers-by could see it under the street lamps. Many looked at it, and one or two smiled, in a friendly, understanding fashion. Perhaps they were comrades too.

Ellen was thinking the same thing over and over, that she had been in a manner baptized that afternoon; and that this was indeed as far beyond mortal love, as she had known its honey beginning, as mortal love itself had been beyond the blue sky of childhood.

The train for home left early in the morning; but before they went, Ellen hurried over to the fountain in Madison Square, and looked for her comrade in his old place. He was not there. Perhaps he had found work: or perhaps he was sick. Or perhaps he had some proud reason, convincing to himself, for not letting her see him again.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE MUSE FORSWEARS THE SUNBONNET

"WELL, of course you're a full-grown woman, and you've made up your own mind. I don't understand it at all," said Aunt Sallie with the nearest approach to temper that could creep into her gentle and beloved voice.

They were sitting on the piazza at Wakerobin. It was far, and it seemed further than it was, from the marching workers of a few days ago. There had been time to write to William Horn in Buckminster, and to receive (by the evening mail tonight), her red card.

"Where do you get it from, Ellen, this queer streak?" inquired Aunt Fran from the rustic bench, where she sat with a shawl thrown over her knees, and the slightly invalid look that had lately come over her, and that struck so poignantly to Ellen's heart.

"From you, I do believe, Aunt Fran! You've set me the bad example of doing some of your own thinking!"

But both her aunts took the matter more seriously. It must be very serious indeed to Aunt Sallie, when she was inclined to argue about it.

"I *cannot* see, Ellen dearie, why you have to join anything, and especially an organization with red flags. Why not read and study about it, and keep out of it? You've gone and got yourself into it so irrevocably!"

"I go further," said Aunt Fran. "I can't see why a

young person like our Ellen needs to read and study about such things at all. If she wants to do good, and be kind to the poor, why can't she go and see them when they're sick, and teach the children to sew, and do all such things, in a ladylike way? Though I think there's something unwholesome about young people going in so much for such work. They ought to be dancing and having a good time."

"Why shouldn't anybody do all three, Aunt Fran?"

"Well, you haven't time and strength enough for all three. I can't think of any sweeter, more Christian thing to do than to go and see the sick.—Not that I'd want you to go where there was anything contagious," added Aunt Fran, looking anxiously at Ellen out of her dark eyes, which seemed finer and deeper, in a face no longer so plump.

"Well—Aunt Fran——"

Ellen drew a long breath.

"I'll tell you both something, now, that I've never told anybody before. Years ago I read a little book of Tolstoi's. I didn't read it all, to be exact. I only read a page or two. It made the Christian religion come to life too suddenly. I thought it had been alive for me before; but when I read that book I saw that it had only been half alive. I was afraid to read any more: afraid, for one thing, that if I did, I'd have to sell all my little bits of jewelry, and give the money to the poor."

Neither of the aunts spoke. It was dark, but Ellen felt, perhaps because she knew it was there—knew beforehand that it would be there,—the instinctive intellectual disgust they could not help having for such fervent, violent ideas about Christianity. Such melodrama

did not fit in with their Hellenic conception of "All things in moderation."

Finally, Aunt Sallie, with an effort, said:

"Perhaps if you got the book now and read it, you wouldn't find it so—unsettling."

"Yes, I would, Aunt Sallie! I'm just as much afraid of it now as I ever was."

The silence settled down again over the piazza. Ellen should have listened to it, should have heard the sound of the planting of trouble and confusion in hearts so warm and dear. But her own inward tumult sounded too loudly in her ears. The relief was too great, of revealing the hidden scars of the great rejection she had made—had been daily making, all her life;—the great refusal to think, in any situation in her life, what her Lord would have done in her place. She went on, with a kind of fierce pleasure in her own wounding words:

"I'm afraid I'm 'all for religion when he walks in his silver slippers in the sunshine.'"

Aunt Sallie, after a moment, said mildly:

"Well, Ellen, now that you've joined this—movement, you won't be afraid to read Tolstoi's book."

Ellen shook her head.

"You see this is really a kind of compromise, Aunt Sallie. I've only done what lots of ordinary men and women do,—not half, not a quarter, what I think Jesus commands."

Aunt Fran at length spoke. In a voice full of love and bitterness, she said:

"The children we have brought up rise and tell us we didn't bring them up to be Christians."

"Aunt Fran!"

"That's just the plain English of it."

"It's not my bringing up, but my own lazy mind and heart," Ellen began, "that make me so afraid of my own conscience."

It was all too much for Aunt Sallie, that Greek lover of limits and reserve. Her intellectual stomach turned.

"Oh, how I hate all this tragedy!" she exclaimed. "Why can't people be quiet, and live in a friendly way in the world, the way they did when I was a child? Everybody was pleasant, and went on with their work, and lived within their means, and respected themselves."

"It seemed that way to you, Aunt Sallie."

"It *was* that way!"

"Well, I suppose it was, to a large extent. The free land wasn't all used up."

"Free what? It was a great deal nicer then than now, I can tell you, with all this agitation and stirring people up. Nobody went around, *then*, trying to make poor people hate rich people, and be discontented with their station in life. We didn't have any of these professional hate-breeders,—Socialists, Anarchists, or whatever you call yourselves."

"I don't call myself an Anarchist, Aunt Sallie."

"Your Aunt Frances and I don't envy Mr. Rockefeller, or Mr. Morgan, or those of our friends that have more money than we have, and come and stay at the Windward House, and bring their big cars, and their maids, and so forth. Then why need anybody envy us?"

"Aunt Sallie, don't you remember that boiled man at the hospital? You wouldn't begrudge *him* a little envy of comfortable, fat, well people like ourselves, would you?"

"Poor creature, no. But such accidents may happen to anybody."

"Only they *do* usually happen to the poor."

"This country pays the highest wages in the world!"

"But that's not saying much. Besides, it charges the most for the necessities of life."

"Well, the Bible says, 'The poor ye have always with you——'"

"I believe that's our favorite national text!"

Alas! that in the very act of speaking of religion, Ellen's voice should become so bitter and belligerent! Was this the way to make reason and the will of God prevail?

Aunt Fran began:

"And if everybody divided up tomorrow, the way you Socialists want them to——"

"*Please*, Aunt Fran, don't say that! Even in the little time I've been interested in Socialism, I've heard that said five hundred thousand times!"

"It's perfectly true, anyway. If everybody divided up tomorrow, in a year from now——"

Ellen stopped her rebellious ears.

"I know every word of it, I can say it backwards in my sleep, I tell you, Aunt Fran! Socialists don't want to 'divide up'! They never propose to divide up. That's just as much of a fiction as ritual murder by the Jews is a fiction! Jesus said to divide up, and the early Christians *did* divide up, and St. Francis said to own nothing, and marry Lady Poverty, and it's a good doctrine for infidels and atheists to attack, because it's a cornerstone of Christianity to divide up; but it isn't Socialism. It's too good for Socialism! Socialism is too conservative for

it! It belongs to the ideals of Jesus, and consequently it's a great deal too radical for Socialism!"

Ellen's high, excited, pugnacious voice died at last into the sweet dewy quiet of the mountain evening. She herself winced at her own echoes, and was glad when Aunt Sallie interrupted them.

"For zeal, commend me to the brand-new convert," said Aunt Sallie, getting up and turning her chair back against the clapboards of the house in case of showers during the night.

With sore hearts she and Ellen kissed each other a warm, troubled, vexed good-night.

"Ellen and I won't go in quite yet," said Aunt Fran from her corner. "I want to ask you, Ellen, what did really take you into Socialism?"

After considering a little while, with a long "We-e-ell," Ellen said:

"Why, it's partly the sense of justice, I suppose, Aunt Fran, and partly the sense of beauty."

"Justice, hey? Well, what do you mean by justice? Do you mean an even start, and letting the winners win, and the losers lose, and no whining and whimpering about it? Because if you do, isn't that what we have now? or would have, if it weren't for our hospitals and asylums and so forth?"

"Aunt Fran, I see your point. I think my own idea of a fair race is a handicap—not a scratch. I think I'd give the cripple a head start. But let that go. Suppose we draw a line on the ground, and make them all toe it when they start. Even so, what about the winners' children, and the losers' children? Do *they* start even?"

Aunt Fran finally said:

"No. That's part of the losers' penalty."

"Doesn't it take you back to Adam in the attempt to find a fair race?"

"I don't know. No! Because often the winners' children lose, and the losers' children win."

"That's true too, Aunt Fran. Isn't it time we went in? I'll put off converting you until tomorrow."

"Partly the sense of justice and partly the sense of *beauty*," Aunt Fran repeated to Aunt Sallie. "That's what took her in, she says. What *does* she mean, about beauty?"

"I don't know. The nearest I can come to understanding what in the world she means is this: Ellen, you remember, never enjoyed a party, no matter how nice, if she could think of anybody that hadn't been invited."

"Hm! That's about what she did mean, Sarah, I guess."

On second thoughts, they both doubted if this were quite what she meant. The sense of beauty was something a little hard to pin down, it seemed.

Ellen's announcement to Sue and David of her entry into Socialism was received with congratulations: though Sue said she never expected to join her with a red card. She simply couldn't, she said, sign away her voting liberty, remote as votes for women might be in Vermont.

"I wonder what you'd have done if you'd seen that call to the colors at the end of the parade? But no, Sue, I don't believe you'd have thought any differently. I don't believe it made any real change in *my* notions. I'd really been consenting in my mind, I suppose, before. I haven't felt any regrets, or wanted any more time. I came home and wrote off right away for my red card."



"Didn't I tell you, Mrs. Micantoni, that buying a new bonnet and darning her brother's socks would never quiet Ellen's mind?" demanded David. "You'll never make a living writing verses now, Ellen Graham."

"I believe I can do something better, maybe, David," said Ellen rather soberly. When David had gone back to his statistics, she said to Sue:

"Let me read you my plan for a piece of verse I care more about than all my old sunbonnets put together."

"Come into the woodshed while I wash these dandelion greens, then, and read it to me," replied Sue. Her novel had succeeded and she had a good market for her short stories, but she seemed to like to live in a state of freedom, and had no maid. "Wait a minute though, till I call little David in and give him his medicine. Davie! Where are you? Come here a minute, little man."

"What's the little man have to take medicine for?" inquired Ellen suspiciously, her face clouding. She was very fond of the little man, and he was fond of her. She had a small accomplishment of being able to play all sorts of wee, grave, imaginative games with little children:—a sort of juvenile holiday edition of her fancy: and David liked, too, the fearful joy of having imaginary "steaks" cut out of his ribs by tickling fingers impersonating knives: and the humorously terrible advances of a crabbish-looking hand up his shoulders toward the neckband of his small shirt, when he wasn't expecting it, still pleased him in his more babyish moods. They were reminiscences of her father's favorite old games with herself and Jim in their childhood. She played creepy-crabby now with little David while Sue was pouring out a teaspoonful of the aromatic mixture.

"What's the matter with Davie?" repeated Ellen when the little Roman had run away again to play.

"Oh, nothing, really, I suppose. He seems to have a little cold. My baby's so near coming, I'm silly and anxious."

"Sue, look here!" Ellen cried, on the impulse she wondered she hadn't had before. "Let me come down and stay here while you're at the hospital."

"Oh, my dear, could you? Then David could come with me, as he wants to so much!"

"Of course I could, and naturally I will. When do you go?"

"Tomorrow—didn't I tell you? But what about your Aunt Fran?"

"Aunt Fran's really better again lately. She's off with the raw eggs, and had one poached this morning."

"Ellen, you're a comfort."

"I'll take care of Davie the best ever!"

"As if I didn't know *that*! Here—where's the poem?"

"It's only one of those first plans I make in prose and put into meter afterward. I mean to put it into four-line stanzas, perfectly plain iambics, rhyming two by two."

"Hurry up and let's hear it."

Ellen began:

"'Alias Jesus.'"

"Oh, Ellen! What a beautiful name!"

"You know of course it refers to the Inasmuch verses,—but I'll go on.

"Certainly we like walking in these gardens;  
They are very pleasant, arbored, pleached:  
The only ugly thing about them  
Is the overworked people who never come into them.'"

"You might almost leave it free verse," suggested Sue. Ellen shook her head and went on:

"Indeed these furs are warm and luxurious  
If we could forget the steel trap  
And the small terrified animal  
Festering to death in it.

'Beloved and delightful are our children;  
I could play all day long with them,  
If the factory children could come out and play too.'

At this Sue's eyes filled with slow tears.  
Ellen went on:

"—*Give us a rest from harping about them:*  
—*We do all that we can.*—  
—Still the hindmost man, alias Jesus, is calling,  
—*I am sick, I am in prison, I am conscripted, I am out of work.*'"

"Oh, Ellen! You've written a real poem this time!  
No arrested development about the morals of *that*."

"Oh, if I can only make a real poem out of it!"

"You will, my dear woman, you will."

"I can't help hoping."

She went down the next afternoon with her suitcase, to stay at Sue's as long as she might be needed. Sue and David got off on the morning after, for the hospital; and Ellen turned with zest to putting Davie to bed and getting him up, and looking after everything about the house. She looked into the refrigerator and found plenty of cold meat and fresh vegetables there: she inspected the jelly and jam in the cellar, and then, with infinite pleasure, she sat down and began to mend Davie's overalls, just home that day from the wash.

Davie did indeed seem to have a bad cold. He coughed a good deal. Ellen followed him about with hen-like

fidgetings, and fearful perturbations and perplexities about whether she would better have him put on his sweater, or take it off, as the May sun grew hot. At about nine o'clock, on the second night, he woke up coughing. She ran up to him, cuddled and tucked him in with secret pleasure in his need of her. He was quiet then until she herself had got into bed, and was allowing herself a half-hour's pillow-reading in a small book of poems she had found on David's shelves. It was a book of dialect sea-ballads by a poet she had never heard of before,—John Masefield. She felt a great hunger for poetry after all her economics. These were very lilting and she was just wondering whether she could ever use any of their swinging, breezy meters, and trying to think what was the difference between this man and Kipling, when little David woke her up again, coughing. Barefooted she ran over the chilly floors to his crib-side, and found him kneeling in his night-drawers on the counterpane, coughing and strangling. The intake of his breath had a curious whistle in it. Was it a whoop?

She took him out of the crib, and cuddled him again, carrying him to a rocking-chair, and prolonging a little over the necessary minutes, her rocking and soothing of him. Her limbs were thrilled through by the sweet and tender dead weight of the sick, sleepy child in her lap.

"Oh, my little Davie," she thought, "you're laying your head in the very spot where I kept Franklin Tallman's picture, the night your mother was married!"

Twice more in the night he woke and coughed, and the second time he whooped again, even more unmistakably. In the morning she telephoned for old Dr. Temple. He came and said it was whooping-cough. It would run for

twelve weeks. He would send and get her an elastic brace for the little boy's body, to protect his muscles from the strain.

Thenceforward every night she was awake from one to seven times; and sometimes Davie coughed and whooped until his face darkened from blood congestion. All day she carried on the housekeeping, cooking for herself and the boy, washing dishes, sweeping, dusting, cleaning. Often in the evening, when the dishes were washed and the dish-pan scrubbed, the towels drying by the window, she sat down and dipped again into those sea-ballads she had found when she first came. There was a glimmer and a haze all over them, a sort of floating brightness, as of sunny distance on smooth water. It was not until she had read them all, and the most beguiling of them many times, that she chanced on the Dedication. It seemed as if she had been picking up pebbles and had suddenly come on an amethyst. This Dedication foretold epics, where it said:

"Not the bemedalled commander, beloved of the Throne,  
Riding cock-horse to parade when the bugles are blown . . .

Of the maimed, of the halt and the blind, in the rain and the cold,  
Of these shall my songs be fashioned, my tales be told."

"This is my poet, at last," Ellen thought to herself, somewhat fancifully, perhaps, and yet prophetically. "He'll be the one to write immortal idylls of the inarticulate. God send he remembers the altogether dumb—the beasts that perish."

It was the next day after that that the expected telegram from the hospital came. The baby weighed eight pounds and was a girl.

Ellen told Davie, and they had a little celebration,

with freshly picked buttercups and meadow-rue on the table for dinner, and sugar on the buttered bread for tea. It was Sunday evening, and Davie always sat up half an hour later on Sundays. He clung tenaciously to this privilege, even though a day of hard coughing and a broken nap at noon had left him too fagged and sleepy to enjoy it. Looking at the heavy eyelids drooping and the pale cheeks, Ellen gingerly proposed bed; but a storm of weeping threatened. "What would Sue do?" the question, in her mind so many times a day, fairly ached for an answer. She knew, though, what her aunts would have done, when she and Jim were small. She took Davie into her own room, and shut the shutters, and lay down, with the little boy beside her, on the big tester bed, and told little old Irish fairy tales, and legends of St. Francis, and the pleasant Sunday-hearted story of Child Charity and the mongrel dog: and softly sang:

"We hunted and we halloo'ed,"

until she could feel the taut, weary nerves slowly smooth out, and Davie kissed her in the dark.

Sweetness beyond all sweetness, she thought, a little boy's kiss and cuddle in the dark! And yet she thought, even in that moment, of the red card in her Bible over on the bureau, and her heart exulted in it, with inclusive passion.

An elderly cousin of Sue's was coming up to take charge, until it should be safe for Sue to bring her baby home. Meantime Sue and the baby were coming to stay at the next farm. To Ellen's astonishment she began to feel a certain resentment that the elderly cousin should be coming. She found herself inventing reasons for the

cousin to be delayed. "I'm jealous!" she discovered, to her intense surprise. "I don't want her cuddling Davie in the night. I don't want her cooking cream of wheat for him, or peeling his orange."

Luckily the elderly cousin (who knew all about children, and had brought up seven or eight) was delayed. A member of her family had rheumatism, and she couldn't be spared. From day to day she promised and put off. Ellen wrote to her reassuringly. She was getting along all right with Davie, she told the elderly cousin. She was really very happy. The rheumatism of the obliging unknown sufferer continued. It held out like the widow's cruse of oil. Ellen feared and hoped from day to day, while the aunts in Tory Hill thought it "inexcusable," the way that elderly person put off coming to Ellen's relief. And after all, Sue and David and the baby all got back to Tewkesbury a few hours before the cousin came.

The sweeping and dusting had, however, got rather ahead of Ellen in that third and last week. Davie coughed and whooped so violently, and wrenched his body so, in spite of his elastic brace, that she had oftener and oftener to get up in the night, and longer and longer to sit up with him. The aunts had driven down two or three times to see how she was getting on, and had said disapprovingly that modern children seemed to "have things" much harder than the previous generation, which they had brought up.

When Ellen went down to the neighboring farmhouse, on Sue's arrival there, to see her and the new baby, leaving Davie to be put to bed by "Farvie," she had a sudden revelation and knew what painter it was, of whose pic-

tures Sue had long ago reminded her, when they first met at Radcliffe. A little pale and blue lipped, Sue was lying on the sofa, while Ellen sat beside her with the new Roman on her fumigated lap.

"It's Botticelli!" Ellen exclaimed. "For eight years I've been trying to think!"

"What's Botticelli?"

"You are! It's partly your dark hair, curling so crisply and queerly all round your face, and partly your being a little pale, I guess, but mostly it's your expression, of course. You look so wise and childish."

"Well, Ellen, I'm very happy, and yet a little anxious about Davie, if that's what you mean."

"Dr. Temple says Davie's getting through with flying colors. You know, he hasn't lost an ounce of flesh, Sue dear."

"If I only had him here, you see."

"Wise and childish and wistful and happy—that's how you look—exactly like Botticelli."

"Ellen!"

"What, Sue?"

"Do you know what we're going to name the baby?"

"No. After one of her grandmothers, I suppose. After her Italian grandmother! No?—Oh, Sue! you can't possibly mean it!"

"Yes! *Ellen*."

Ellen was without any words for a time.

"And if anything ever happened to David and me, we'd be perfectly contented to have you bring up our children."

"That's the most beautiful thing, Sue, that one woman ever said to another!"



## CHAPTER XXIII

### ANOTHER LETTER

"WHAT became of 'Alias Jesus,' Ellen?"

"*The Proletariat* took it."

"You didn't try any of the other magazines, then?"

"No: though I don't think they'd have taken it. But I wanted it in *The Proletariat*. They put it in last week. All round it they put tiny silhouettes of men working at dangerous trades, in mines, and on sky-scrapers and bridges, and cattle-ships, and among explosives, and so forth: and every fourth silhouette was a man looking for work and being turned away. It made a sort of frame round my 'Alias Jesus.'"

"That *was* fine!"

"Yes, it was really very beautiful. I was pleased to the very soul at the tragic power it put into the verses. Those artists on *The Proletariat* work for nothing, you know. *The Proletariat* can't afford to pay anything. I wonder if volunteer art, *con amore*, isn't often a shade more beautiful than anything that's paid for?"

"Perhaps it is. I wonder!"

This was the day of little Ellen's christening. She was six weeks old. In the ancient brick church in Tewkesbury, with Great-aunt Jane for the other godmother, the second little Roman was vowed to the following of the Cross. She lay composedly on the young min-

ister's arm, in the old yellowing embroidered dress that Sue's mother had worn; and Sue began softly to cry, for that reason, and because her invalid mother, who had seen little Davie, would never see little Ellen. She had died in the year after Ellen's father's death. Professor Redwood had come up from Cambridge to be the baby's godfather; but he had gone back after the service. It was four o'clock now, and Ellen was leaving for home.

"Good-by, Sue dear. I don't know of anything that could make me much happier than I am tonight."

"Until your brother Jim marries and has children. They'll come nearer than mine!"

"They'll come very near, then."

She bent over her namesake and kissed her, and biked away home, in the cool of the summer afternoon.

Aunt Sallie came down the road to meet her. Aunt Fran was taking a nap, in her rocker on the piazza, with the *Censor* spread out over her face.

Well, how had the christening gone off? The big boiler had begun to leak that morning, and they had had the plumber there all the afternoon, mending it. Young Tabbie had caught a mouse, and old Keturah had caught a bird, and would have to be belled. The second radishes were big enough to pull: they would have some for tea. Callers had been over from the New Street.

"Ellen, I must say I hope you'll never marry."

"Marry! at my age—it's unbecoming even to talk about it."

"You're only twenty-seven."

"That's almost thirty."

"Well, what's thirty?"

"Besides, Aunt Sallie, I'm a sort of constant creature.

I was very fond of Franklin Tallman, once upon a time. Did I say 'was'? I am."

"Ellen, I never told you. I think he's married."

"I know he is, my dear. I saw it in the paper."

"Well——"

"Well!"

They walked along wheeling the bicycle together.

"I'm mighty glad you're home at last."

"Why, I've only been away half a day, Sallie Mowbray!"

"It seems longer when you're in another township. You were down there almost three weeks in May, too, remember."

"You and Aunt Fran had a good rest from all my viewy talk."

"We don't want any more rest from it, anyway!"

"Remember, now, it's not my fault if I'm spoiled!"

"Oh, by the way, there's a letter for you upstairs in your room."

"Who's it from?"

"Some newspaper office."

"Well, I'll get it when I go to bed. Some advertisement, probably."

When at last, after a long evening of desultory but incessant home talk, such as any household breeds, daily, for the use of an intimate small family, Ellen went to bed, she found the letter on her bureau. It was in a strange handwriting. The envelope was embossed with the seal of a great New York daily, the *Censor's* special rival.

Ellen took out the letter carelessly, but read it in a dream.

It was very short.

"We only want to tell you, comrade, that four of us, workers for the Revolution, have learned your 'Alias Jesus' by heart."

It was signed with four strange names, one of which was a woman's; supposedly four young reporters.

She sat late by the open window, reading the letter over and over.

At last she opened her Bible, and interleaved it, in St. Matthew, beside her red card. She left it there a long time, while she said her prayers. Then she took it out and stood it up on the bureau, between her mother's and her father's pictures. She left it there for quite a long time. She intended to leave it there all night. But after she had blown out the light, she felt her way over to the bureau, and felt for the letter in the darkness, found it and put it in her bosom, where the picture of Franklin Tallman once had lain.

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